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THE

USE AND ABUSE

OF

PARTY-FEELING

IN

MATTERS OF RELIGION

CONSIDERED IN

EIGHT SERMONS

PREACHED BEFORE

THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR MDCCCXXII,

At the Lecture founded by

THE LATE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

Lecture
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BY

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EDWARD COPLESTON, D. D.

PROVOST OF ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD,

AS A TESTIMONY OF AFFECTIONATE RESPECT,

AND

AS A SLIGHT TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE,

FOR THE INESTIMABLE ADVANTAGES OF

HIS INSTRUCTION,

AND OF HIS FRIENDSHIP,

THIS VOLUME IS INSCRIBED

BY HIS FAITHFUL AND OBLIGED

FRIEND AND SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

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THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY.

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EXTRACT

FROM

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

——"I give and bequeath my Lands and "Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and Scho- "lars of the University of Oxford for ever, to "have and to hold all and singular the said "Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the in- "tents and purposes hereinafter mentioned; "that is to say, I will and appoint that the "Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford "for the time being shall take and receive all "the rents, issues, and profits thereof, and (after "all taxes, reparations, and necessary deduc- "tions made) that he pay all the remainder to "the endowment of eight Divinity Lecture "Sermons, to be established for ever in the said "University, and to be performed in the man- "ner following:

" I direct and appoint, that, upon the first " Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly " chosen by the Heads of Colleges only, and by " no others, in the room adjoining to the Print- " ing-House, between the hours of ten in the " morning and two in the afternoon, to preach " eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, the year fol- " lowing, at St. Mary's in Oxford, between the " commencement of the last month in Lent " Term, and the end of the third week in Act " Term.

" Also I direct and appoint, that the eight " Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached " upon either of the following Subjects—to con- " firm and establish the Christian Faith, and to " confute all heretics and schismatics—upon the " divine authority of the holy Scriptures—upon " the authority of the writings of the primitive " Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the pri- " mitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord " and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity " of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the " Christian Faith, as comprehended in the " Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

" Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight " Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always

" printed, within two months after they are
" preached, and one copy shall be given to the
" Chancellor of the University, and one copy to
" the Head of every College, and one copy to
" the Mayor of the city of Oxford, and one
" copy to be put into the Bodleian Library; and
" the expense of printing them shall be paid
" out of the revenue of the Land or Estates
" given for establishing the Divinity Lecture
" Sermons; and the Preacher shall not be paid,
" nor be entitled to the revenue, before they
" are printed.

" Also I direct and appoint, that no person
" shall be qualified to preach the Divinity Lec-
" ture Sermons, unless he hath taken the de-
" gree of Master of Arts at least, in one of the
" two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge;
" and that the same person shall never preach
" the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice."

INTRODUCTION.

TO oppose the progress of false doctrines and of schism was among the principal objects proposed by the Founder of these lectures. It is undoubtedly necessary for this purpose that the various articles of the orthodox faith, especially such as from time to time may chance to be controverted, should be expounded and maintained; and the duty of Church-union inculcated. But it is perhaps no less necessary, with a view to the same object, that we should be put on our guard against such conduct as may lead *others* into those faults, though we remain free from them ourselves; and that the cause of truth should be, as far as possible, protected from the detriment which it may receive from injudicious friends, as well as from enemies. Erroneous tenets may be unintentionally aided in their progress, even by those who do not adopt them;

and schisms fostered, by those who do not join in them. To suggest therefore such cautions as may be requisite for avoiding these evils cannot be deemed a superfluous task, especially as less attention has been bestowed on this department than on most others; and as better success may often be hoped for, in preventing a malady, than in curing it.

Having been led, with this view, to attempt a delineation of *Party-spirit*, and the faults of conduct and of temper connected with it, it was of course necessary to characterize that natural and *allowable* feeling of attachment to the body we belong to, of which Party-spirit is the excess; lest I should be understood as favouring the contrary extreme, and condemning all social-feeling in religious matters, short of that which extends to the whole of our fellow creatures.

The principle, whose use and abuse in the concerns of religion forms the subject of the ensuing discussion, can hardly be said to have any well-established and precisely appropriate name in our language; and is

in fact most commonly denoted by the French expression, "*Esprit de corps;*" "Party-spirit" being a term seldom employed but in an unfavourable sense: while "Social-feeling" again, or "Philan-"thropy," would convey too wide a signification; the principle in question being a certain *limited social-feeling*, distinct from that which connects together all mankind. That species of the feeling in question which more particularly falls under my present consideration, the Apostles seem to have denoted by a word (Φιλαδελφία) which our translators render "Brotherly-"love:" but the use of this last term in that precise signification is not altogether established. I have therefore adopted the term "*Party-feeling*" for this purpose; not as completely unexceptionable, but as appearing, on the whole, the best that could be found, without resorting to a foreign language.

The discussion of this subject falls naturally under three heads. I. The description of Party-feeling as to its use and its

abuse: II. The rules and cautions to be observed, generally, for securing the advantages, and avoiding the evils, in question: III. The application of these rules to the present state of the Church in this country.

The first of these heads forms the subject of the first two discourses; in which the proper degree, and right direction, of Party-feeling, and also its excess and perversion, are, respectively, treated of.

In the discussion of the former branch, I have endeavoured to characterize generally that principle in our nature which attaches men to any Society or Body of which they may be members; (which seems to arise from the disposition to afford, and to delight in, mutual sympathy)—to point out the *final causes* for which it was implanted by the great Author of nature, *i. e.* the good purposes to which it is subservient, when well regulated:—which are principally, first, increased energy in pursuit of a *common* object; secondly, regular cooperation; thirdly, mutual control and regulation; and fourthly, an advantageous division of labour:—and lastly, to offer some observations on

the right employment of it in the Christian Church; whose Founder, knowing what was in man, enlisted the principle in question into the service of his Religion.

In proceeding to describe under the name of Party-spirit the excesses and misapplications of this principle, I have noticed three faults as most especially characteristic of that spirit: *viz.* first a disposition to *prefer the means to the end,*—the body itself, and whatever tends to support and strengthen it,—to the object itself which it originally proposed; secondly, an over-readiness to *form* parties, on insufficient grounds; and thirdly, a narrow-minded and uncandid bigotry. To these are added, as *causes* and concomitants of Party-spirit, first, the desire of taking the lead; secondly, fondness for novelty; thirdly, love of disputation; and fourthly, the Pride which delights in triumph and in insolent revenge. The evil *consequences* of Party-spirit are also noticed: *viz.* first, the extinction of Christian Charity; secondly, Scandal to the cause of Religion; and thirdly, the establishment and propagation

of Error; which is the more readily received, in proportion as men are blinded by the spirit of Party.

II. In treating of the next head, *viz.* the rules to be observed, generally, for avoiding the evils above described, it appeared advisable, for the sake of affording a convenient aid to the memory, to arrange these rules under four heads: treating first of those which relate generally to the discipline and regulation of *our own minds;* secondly, of those which concern our *conduct towards others;* thirdly, of those relating to the *subject-matter* on which we may be engaged; and fourthly, of those which regard the *language* we employ.

Accordingly I have endeavoured, in the third lecture, to delineate, and to suggest rules for cultivating and cherishing in ourselves such dispositions as may most effectually counteract the faults described in the preceding discourse. The third and fourth lectures are devoted to the consideration of those principles which ought to direct our judgment and treatment of *those who differ* from us; whether that difference shall,

upon consideration, appear to be innocent and allowable, or deserving of censure.

With a view to the former of these cases, the principal cautions to be observed are, first, to beware of *mistaking the meaning* of any one, and imputing to him sentiments which he does not really entertain; secondly, to make due allowance for *weakness* of intellect, backwardness in *knowledge*, and inaptitude for *accurate statements;* and thirdly, to allow also for such differences of natural or acquired *temper and taste* as imply nothing sinful; differences which even divine inspiration, as we may perceive from the characteristic style of composition of each of the sacred writers, does not entirely do away.

In treating of the rules to be observed in our conduct towards those who appear *culpable*, it was necessary to revert to the same heads which had been before considered *in a different point of view; viz.* in treating of the regulation of *our own* temper. For we must be prepared to find our opponents liable to the same faults which we are to guard against in ourselves;

such as, first, party-spirit; secondly, unchristian *bitterness;* and thirdly, fondness for *controversy;* and it should be our study both to counteract, or at least avoid promoting, those faults, and also to take precautions against the ill effects which may result from them. With respect to the last of these three heads especially, several cautions are suggested against rashly laying ourselves open to the arts of a subtle disputant: and against fostering insignificant heresies by imprudent opposition; or inflaming the controversial spirit by assuming the *polemical* style, where the *didactic* would be more suitable; and it is recommended to take a *comprehensive* view of any question that may be agitated, instead of being exclusively occupied in answering every cavil that may be brought forward: and carefully to suit the course of argument adopted, to the peculiar object which may be in each case proposed; whether that be, to *reclaim* those who are tainted with error, or to *warn* others against being seduced by it.

With respect to the subject-matter of

the discussions we may be engaged in, St. Paul's precept must be observed, to avoid "foolish and unlearned questions" as gendering strife; under which head I have placed all such inquiries as are likely to lead to controversy respecting, first, matters too *abstruse* and mysterious for the human faculties to comprehend; secondly, *minute* and trifling; or thirdly, altogether *speculative*, and unconnected with practice. And under the first of these heads, two mistakes are noticed, which have an especial tendency to lead to presumptuous speculation; first, the expectation, oftentimes ill grounded, that *full* and *distinct* notions may be attained of whatever is *revealed* in Scripture; and secondly, the mistake of supposing that we understand more clearly than we do, any thing of which the *name* is very familiar to us.

The cautions suggested with respect to the language employed are, first, to be duly on our guard against the *ambiguity* of terms; secondly, not too rashly to judge of men's doctrines from their phraseology, —insisting too strongly on their employing

the same terms with ourselves; and thirdly, to avoid adhering too closely to any such fixed set of expressions as have been made, or are likely to become, the cant *language of a party;* which has a tendency not only to gender "strifes about words," but also, both to deaden men's attention to the *things* signified, and to lead to *erroneous theories* for explaining the doctrines in question.

III. The third point originally proposed being the application of the principles above laid down to the existing state of the Christian Church in this country, this subject naturally divides itself into two branches: the case of Separatists from the Church, and that of adverse parties *within* the Church, requiring, each, a distinct consideration. For in the one case, Party-feeling requires to be wisely *regulated*, and kept within proper bounds; in the other case, it is to be deprecated, and as far as possible *extinguished*, altogether.

In what relates to our conduct towards Dissenters, I have endeavoured to point out the middle course between intolerant bi-

gotry on the one hand, and disregard of the virtue of Christian unity on the other; and have recommended, as the most effectual means of counteracting the prevalence of schism, first, an *Exemplary Life;* secondly, *Zeal* in the inculcation of truth; and thirdly, a *conciliatory* and Christian mildness.

With respect to the internal disunion which exists, or which may at any time be likely to arise, among the members of our Church, I have summed up and applied to the case in question such of the fore-mentioned rules as appeared the most likely to counteract the Spirit of Party within that Church: adding some cautions against certain opposite extremes which seem at present most prevalent: and concluding by giving a short sketch of the difficulties which those must be prepared to encounter, who determine to keep clear of the Spirit of Party, and to steer between opposite extremes; as well as of the encouragements by which they are to be supported.

In the whole of the remarks that have

been offered there is little, I am aware, that can claim the praise of originality, except of *arrangement and application*. But I conceived it would be no unprofitable task, especially in times like the present, to collect into a small compass, and exhibit in an orderly form, a number of such principles of conduct as are most requisite with a view to the counteraction both of Heresies and of unchristian Divisions; and which, though no one of them can be strictly said to be *unknown*, are yet only to be met with loosely scattered in the works of various authors; and are, in practice, perpetually overlooked. The utility of copious disquisitions on particular points of doctrine, is not disputed; but it is hoped that there may be also no less utility in a collection of such general maxims as are intimately connected with the attainment of truth in *all* matters of doctrine alike, and with the preservation both of Christian Faith and Christian Unity.

In historical illustrations of the matters under discussion, I have been more sparing than some perhaps might deem advis-

able: but as the necessary limits of the present work would have precluded the possibility of introducing a collection of *many* instances to illustrate each point, (which in fact would have occupied several volumes) so on the other hand the selection of a *few* such instances, might have been attended with this disadvantage; that since differences of opinion would have existed with respect to each case brought forward, some might have been inclined to doubt the justness of the principle itself laid down, in consequence of their not admitting its applicability in the instance adduced: so that the force of the reasoning might sometimes have been weakened, by its being supposed to *rest* on the examples brought forward by way of illustration. I have therefore thought it better, for the most part, to state only the general reasonings by which each position is supported; leaving each of my readers to select for himself, from the numerous and well known examples that may be found, such as may appear to him to afford the most suitable illustration. And if by this means I shall

in any instance have avoided also the risk of giving unnecessary *offence* to any one, I shall have succeeded the more completely in conforming to the principles which I have all along studied to inculcate.

PROPERTY OF PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

LECTURE I.

NATURE AND USES OF PARTY-FEELING.

1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.

As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.

NO original and essentially inherent principle of our nature is in itself either mischievous or useless. The maxim, that nature does nothing in vain, is not more true in the material, than in the moral world. And as each organ of the human body (however liable to become the seat of disease, or to exceed its due proportion) is calculated to promote, in its natural and healthy state, some beneficial end; so, in the mind also, whatever mischievous excesses and perversions any principle of action may be liable to, (through our frail and sinful nature,) we may be assured that if it shall appear to *be* really a universal

principle of our nature, it will be found, on a careful examination, to have been designed, and to be wisely adapted, to promote (when under due guidance) some good purpose.

The good purposes indeed to which some of our natural propensities tend are so manifest and so important, as sometimes to have drawn off men's attention from the propensities themselves, and led them to regard the desire of those ends as the sole principle of action; thus, in many cases, mistaking (as has been well expressed) "the "wisdom of God for the wisdom of man[a]," and overlooking the wise contrivance of his providence in implanting such feelings and desires as lead us (as it were blindly) to the accomplishment of what He sees to be beneficial purposes.

One of the most important of these principles, and one which is not in general sufficiently attended to, is that which binds together the members of any community, class, or party, and renders the body to which they belong, considered *as* a body, a

[a] Smith's Moral Sentiments.

distinct object of attachment. Not indeed that this part of our constitution has been by any means overlooked altogether; but it is seldom, if ever, that a comprehensive view of it has been taken: some particular branches of it have been noticed fully, while the wide extent and variety of its operation has been disregarded: and its evil or beneficial effects have been viewed separately, without tracing them up to their source, as modifications of what may be reckoned one common, innate principle of the human heart.

Thus, the soundest among the ancients, while they very wisely pronounced man to be by nature a social being, impelled to form communities, not by any consideration of the advantages thence accruing, but by a sort of instinctive tendency, yet confined their attention almost exclusively to the *political* union; which is only one among many which man has a tendency to form. And various writers have made just remarks on the extravagances of party-spirit, without however perceiving, or at least without pointing out, that these are only the

abuses and perversions of a principle, which, being essential to our nature, exists, in a greater or less degree, in all mankind; which is in itself (like all our other propensities) neither virtuous nor vicious, but is calculated, under the control of reason, to lead to important benefits.

That it is not common to take a general view of this principle, in all its various bearings and modifications, is evident from this, that it can hardly be said even to have a *name* in our language. The practical effects of a man's attachment to his country, to his faction, to his fraternity, to his sect, and the like, are so different, both in nature and in importance, that our attention is drawn off from the sameness of the general feeling which is at the bottom of all, and which appears different, chiefly from its being directed to different objects. And it is the same with other principles also: for instance, those who are not at all habituated to the investigation of human nature, are apt to be startled at being told that the principle which actuates the conqueror in subjugating empires, is essentially the same as

may often be seen in a child who is anxious to take the lead in directing the sports of his playfellows; and that, immensely as the effects differ, the cause in each may rightly be called by the same name, *ambition*.

That principle then which I am now speaking of, that party-feeling, (if I may be allowed to give it such a name, in default of a more precise one,) may be described as a certain limitation of the general social principle which binds together the human species: it consists in the attachment and regard men are disposed to feel towards any class, body, or association they may belong to, in itself, and towards the fellow-members of the same, *as such*, over and above any personal regard they may have for them individually; and in a zeal for the prosperity of the society, and for the objects it peculiarly proposes, over and above what is felt for those objects in themselves, and what would be felt for them by each individual, supposing him singly to pursue them. It must be added, that men have a natural tendency to sympathize and unite with those who coincide

with them in any point; and hence are led to *form* these communities or parties, as well as to feel towards those in which they may be placed, that attachment and zeal which have been just mentioned.

Those who delight in analysing the complex principles of our nature, and referring them to their simplest elements, may perhaps without much difficulty trace up that of which we are now speaking, to our natural desire of sympathy, and disposition to afford it. We take a pleasure in meeting with persons with whose situations and sentiments we can sympathize: we are pleased likewise with the idea of their sympathy with us; from which consequently we derive additional ardour also in a common pursuit, and increased confidence in a common opinion: and hence arises a mutual attachment between those among whom this mutual sympathy exists. Whether however this or any different theory be adopted; or whether the party-feeling we are speaking of is to be referred to any more simple principles of our nature, of which it is the necessary result, or is to be regarded as itself one of

the primary elements, as it were, of the human mind, is a question of no consequence to our present object: only let its existence and universality be admitted, and its effects referred to it, as their immediate source; not to any calculations of reason upon views of expediency.

That there *is* such a principle in our nature, as far at least as regards the political union, was, as has been just remarked, strongly maintained by the wisest of the ancient philosophers. Cicero in particular (whose testimony is in this case of the more weight, from his being occupied rather in retailing the most approved doctrines of others, than in giving the results of his own inquiries) makes the desire of uniting in societies an essential characteristic of our nature: he denies that men are led to this, merely with a view to the mutual supply of their wants; for if a man, says he, could command all things needful or desirable for himself by the virtue of a magic wand, he would still covet the social union: and he maintains, that, as bees do not assemble for the purpose of building a honey-

comb, but, being congregated by a natural instinct, employ themselves in this joint work, so men also are drawn together by a natural associating principle, and not, originally, from a mere view to those advantages which result from their union.

But moreover, even in those cases where a coalition of any kind is formed manifestly and distinctly for the sake of promoting some common purpose, still the zeal and the mutual attachment of the persons concerned, is not, even then, to be measured by the value, (*i. e.* the original value,) even in their own eyes, of the advantage proposed. Their being engaged in a common pursuit, is generally found to bind them to each other, and to increase their eagerness for the object pursued, to a degree which even they themselves would never have anticipated. What exertions and what sacrifices have been produced by patriotism (*i. e.* attachment to the *political* community we belong to) is well known: it has often led men to resign cheerfully all personal objects, and even life itself, for the sake of the community; and thus to

forego all their own share of those common advantages, for whose sake alone, as some pretend, the community itself was formed. In this case indeed there is an obligation of duty; the force of which has often, no doubt, had great influence in producing such conduct; but we cannot pronounce a sense of duty to be in general the sole motive, nor, always, even a part of the motive, which leads to these results, if we consider both how little of a general sense of duty has apparently been felt by men who yet have plainly shewn themselves not destitute of patriotism,—how little many of them have been disposed, in any other case, to sacrifice their own to their neighbour's good;—what flagitious actions, in violation of duty, some have perpetrated, with a view to the benefit of their country;—and lastly, how much of the same zeal and attachment is daily shewn by the members of such factions, sects, or parties, as have *not* that claim upon the conscience. In fact, human conduct altogether would be an inexplicable riddle to any one who should deny or overlook the existence of

party-feeling as a distinct, and powerful, and general principle of our nature. Every page of history might teach us, if the experience of what daily passes before our eyes were not sufficient, how slight an attraction is enough to combine men in parties, for any object, or for no object at all,—how slender a tie will suffice to hold them together,—whether a community of interests, or of situations, or of opinions, (or even the colour of an ornament, as in the celebrated case of the rival parties in the Byzantine circus;) and with what eagerness, often what disproportionate eagerness, men engage in the cause of the party they have espoused. Even when they unite for the sake of some object which they previously had much at heart, what an accession of ardour do they receive from their union! like kindled brands, which, if left to themselves, separately, would be soon extinct, but when thrown together, burst into a blaze.

Now if to the considerations which have been thus briefly touched upon, we add this circumstance, that the principle we are

speaking of is not only a source of union, but also of division;—of discord, no less than of concord, (since it implies in its very nature, hostility to every thing that opposes the interests and objects of the party adopted; a jealous aversion to every rival party, and a tendency to subdivide, and separate into fresh parties, upon any point in which a certain number coincide with each other, and differ from the rest) and that thence it has had a principal share in producing and keeping up almost all the contests that have ever existed, from the most gigantic wars between nations, down to the most obscure local controversies; and has even given rise probably to more dissensions between individuals than were ever produced by merely personal feelings:—if, I say, we consider all this, we cannot but admit that of all the principles which actuate the human mind, this is one of the most remarkable, and in its effects most momentous.

It was observed in the opening of this lecture, that every one of our natural propensities is calculated to answer, under the

control of reason, some good purpose: and the final cause of the one now under discussion, it is not difficult to perceive. Party-feeling has an evident tendency, under wise management, to promote the objects of the body, whatever they may be: whenever (as is often the case) it tends to frustrate those very objects, *that* is always from some excess, imprudence, or mismanagement; such as has often occasioned courage to lead to defeat instead of victory.

The object indeed which is proposed by a party may be itself bad; and then, the party-feeling, or whatever else conduces to the accomplishment of such a purpose, becomes mischievous: but this is to be laid to the account of the depravity of the persons concerned, and does not prove party-feeling to be itself an evil: for no one would deny such qualities, for instance, as industry or intrepidity to be in themselves valuable; though if possessed by an unprincipled man, their effects are injurious. Supposing then the object proposed by a party to be a proper one, (and it is their fault if

they propose any that is not) party-feeling, if it conduces (as I have said) to that object, must be allowed to be a useful principle. Now that it has this tendency, is evident even from what has been already said: the strength of any feeling, and the ardour of any pursuit, are heightened by mutual sympathy, and by mutual consciousness of that sympathy; and men feel encouraged and confirmed in their common belief by a sort of tacit appeal to each other's authority. Moreover, a party have the advantage of acting in concert, and thereby of cooperating far more effectually than if each acted singly and independently, in pursuit of the very same objects: they may consult together, and jointly form plans for simultaneous exertion, deriving strength, like the bundle of lances in the well known fable, from mutual support. They have likewise the benefit of mutual control and regulation, so necessary to prevent any individual member from interfering, by his own fault or imprudence, with the common benefit of the body; whence arise, in political communities, the advan-

tages of civil government. And lastly, they possess the advantage of a division of labour; by which each member may have that office assigned him for which he is best qualified, or which, at least, he may the better discharge, from being enabled to confine his attention to it. But indeed, besides this subordinate distribution of offices, the very formation of societies for the attainment of any good ends, may be regarded as in itself a kind of beneficial division of labour; and the tendency to form them, as implanted with a view to that benefit; since by this means the exertions of each individual, by being limited to a narrower sphere, are bestowed with greater effect. And hence, in the case of the political union, the general prosperity of mankind is better promoted by the judicious exertions of each individual in the service of his own country, than it would be, if this general prosperity were the main and immediate object pursued by each, without any division into separate communities.

Such then being the nature, and such

the final causes, of party-feeling, it remains to inquire how far the Christian religion is accommodated to this part of our constitution.

It is a remarkable characteristic of the Gospel, that it aims, at correcting indeed, and elevating, but not, at destroying our nature. Unlike the stoical philosophy, which taught men that they were to eradicate every passion, and live merely by the dictates of reason;—unlike most false religions, which inculcate precepts decidedly unnatural, such as, to renounce society, to abstain from innocent enjoyments, and submit to self-inflicted tortures,—Christianity conforms to our nature wherever it is not depraved; and thus affords a strong presumption of its having proceeded from Him who "knew what was in man." And as there is no natural propensity, that is in itself evil, so there is none that in itself is condemned by Christianity; though it seeks to direct all of them to higher objects. Our Lord does not require men to despise applause, and to follow virtue solely for its own sake, without any thought of

their conduct being seen and approved, but to seek the praise of their "Father who "seeth in secret, and who will reward them "openly:" he tells them not, to be indifferent about the future, and improvident; but to lay up "for themselves treasure in "heaven," rather than accumulate the perishable goods of this world: he does not exhort them to root out the feeling of pity, as a weakness, but to minister to the poor and helpless, for his sake; and not to renounce human affections, but to love all mankind, including even their enemies. And instead of exhorting his disciples to lay aside all party-feeling, and labour singly for their own salvation and that of mankind at large;—instead of merely leaving a set of doctrines and precepts, to be adopted and obeyed by each insulated individual who might approve of them, he combined his followers himself into a distinct society, which we term the Church; of which he is himself the head, and all Christians the members; of which he appointed the first governors, and which he promised to be with always, even unto the end of the world.

This Christian fraternity then, this communion of saints, had a formal institution; it has a solemn initiation, in the sacrament of baptism;—it has rules of belief and of conduct for its members, in the holy Scriptures; it has a distinct object, the propagation and preservation of the faith, and the spiritual welfare of its members;—it has regular governors to watch over its concerns; and it stands opposed, in spiritual warfare, to the corruptions of unregenerate human nature, and the wiles of Satan, who is called "the "God of this world." This limited social-feeling,—this fraternal spirit, which Christ and his Apostles strove to cherish, was not designed indeed to supersede universal philanthropy, but it was manifestly considered by them as a distinct duty from that. When our Lord said, "A new commandment I "give unto you, That ye love one another," he cannot properly be interpreted as recommending general benevolence; which, though undoubtedly a divine precept, could not justly have been designated as a *new* one, since even the heathen, however imperfectly they practised this duty, were by

no means ignorant of it. He manifestly had in view the mutual love of Christians *as* such. And in like manner the Apostles, when they exhort us to "*add* to brotherly-"kindness, charity,"—to "honour all men, "and love the brotherhood,"—"to do good "unto all men, but especially unto them "that are of the household of faith,"—are evidently drawing a marked distinction between the two virtues, of philanthropy, and the spirit of Christian brotherhood.

Thus did Christianity take advantage of this associating and coalescing principle of our nature, and enlist it, as it were, into her own service, by giving it a new direction; in order to secure, in the most important of all concerns, those advantages which are the final cause of its being implanted in our minds.

What these advantages are, has been already slightly mentioned. All of them seem to have been proposed and secured by the embodying of the Christian Church. The increased zeal,—the encouragement,—and the consolation, which men derive from the consciousness that others sympa-

thize in their sentiments, their hopes, and their wishes, seems to have been regarded by the Apostles as of no small importance. St. Paul especially takes frequent opportunities to remind his converts of their being fellow-members of one great incorporated society,—of his own prayers for them, and sympathy with them, and anxiety for the success of their common cause,—and of the regard and interest felt for them by the members of the other local churches. "We being many," says St. Paul to the Romans, "are one body in Christ, and "every one members one of another;" and again, "Be kindly affectioned one to an-"other, with brotherly love;" and again to the Corinthians, "Whether one member "suffer, all the members suffer with it, or "one member be honoured, all the mem-"bers rejoice with it." And to the Thessalonians he writes, "We are bound to thank "God always for you, brethren, as it is "meet, because that your faith groweth "exceedingly, and the charity of every one "of you all toward each other aboundeth, "so that we *ourselves glory in you* in the

"churches of God, for your patience and "faith." He seldom indeed begins an epistle to any church without his own and his fellow labourers' prayers and good-wishes; or concludes it, without mentioning the sympathy and interest felt for them by their Christian brethren.

The proofs indeed of the divine origin of Christianity are so strong, and its importance to each individual believer so great, that, considering the case abstractedly, it might seem needless to attempt confirming a man's faith in it by appealing to the authority of others who believe the same; or heightening his zeal in the cause, by setting before him their example: and certainly, the early converts at least, were not led to embrace the Gospel by any tendency to comply with prevailing notions. But such is human nature, that we cannot completely trust to a man's always conforming his belief to reason, or his practice to his belief; but must resort to the aid of every secondary motive that can be brought into play. And undoubtedly none of these have more influence on faith and feeling

and practice, than the example and sympathy of others. Where indeed is the man who can presume to say, that his faith would be equally firm, if no one held it besides himself? or that his feelings and his conduct would be the same, if he found that, in both, he stood perfectly single?

Again, the regular government of any society, and the mutual instruction and assistance, the admonition, exhortation, and correction, which its members may receive from each other, with a view to the furtherance of the common cause, and their being enabled by this means to combine their exertions,—to act in concert, on plans jointly devised,—and to hold together in one body, instead of interfering with each other, are among the advantages to be derived from their union. And these accordingly were not overlooked by the Apostles: "Obey "them," says St. Paul, "that have the rule "over you, and submit yourselves; for they "watch for your souls as they that must "give an account:" and again, "Let us con-"sider one another, to provoke unto love "and to good works; not forsaking the

"assembling of ourselves together, as the "manner of some is, but exhorting one "another." "Ye younger," says St. Peter, "submit yourselves to the elder; yea all "of you be subject one to another." "Con- "fess your faults," says St. James, "one to "another, and pray one for another, that "ye may be healed." And Timotheus, whom St. Paul so carefully instructs in his episcopal duties, and charges to "preach, "reprove, and exhort," was especially left by him at Ephesus, to "charge some, that "they preach no other doctrine;" and thus to prevent disorders in the Church. Lastly, one of the most important advantages which the members of any embodied society possess, is, the distribution of distinct offices among different individuals; which is usually called the division of labour. In the political community it is well known how much the increase of national wealth, and the other objects proposed by the civil union, is by this means promoted: but any other kind of association also may, upon the same principle, secure to itself similar, if not equal advantages: and the

Christian Church especially, may possess them in a most important degree. Besides the benefit of having a certain number of Christians set apart as ministers of the Gospel, (not indeed as the only persons engaged in God's service, but as more peculiarly and exclusively devoted to it, and withdrawn from other occupations,) besides this, I say, there is an opportunity for a still further division of labour among these last;—still narrower spheres of action may be taken by different Christian ministers, without any fear that other departments should be neglected. Some may devote themselves more especially to the instruction of youth, others, to the edification of their adult hearers; some, to the critical study of the sacred text, others to the ascertaining and defending of the doctrines contained in it, or to researches into the belief and practice of the primitive church; and some again may employ themselves chiefly in collecting the results of the learned labours of others, throwing them into a popular form, illustrating, and enforcing them: some, may be champions of the faith

against heretics, some commentators, some missionaries. In short, the diversity of useful employments, in the common cause of our religion, may be no less than that of the spiritual gifts among the ancient Christians: a diversity which, as it tended ultimately to the promotion of a single end, St. Paul exhorted them to regard as a bond of more perfect union, not a source of jealousy or division: and he compares it to the diversity of functions of the several members of the body, which cooperate for the common welfare of the whole. "As the "body," says he, "is one, and hath many "members, and all the members of that one "body, being many, are one body: so also "is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all "baptized into one body. . . . . For the body "is not one member, but many. If the foot "shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am "not of the body; is it therefore not of the "body? And if the ear shall say, Because I "am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it "therefore not of the body? If the whole "body were an eye, where were the hearing? "If the whole were hearing, where were the

"smelling? .... Ye," says he, "are the "body of Christ, and members in particu- "lar." And again, "Are all apostles? are "all prophets? are all teachers? are all "workers of miracles? have all the gifts of "healing? do all speak with tongues? do "all interpret?"

These diverse gifts and offices were intended, as he continually reminds his converts, to conduce the more effectually to the one common end, the stability, and edification, and augmentation of the community.—Such being then the advantages, and such the divine sanction of the Christian community, it is clearly the duty of every believer in Christ to use his best endeavours for preserving its vigour and its unity. *He* is an unworthy and useless member, who has no spirit of fellowship with his brethren,—no inclination to unite, sympathize, and cooperate with them: *he* is a corrupt and mischievous member, who either himself creates, or provokes others to create, groundless divisions and dissension in it. The one fault may be characterized as a *defect* of that party-feeling we have been speaking

of, (a defect at least of that particular branch of it which concerns the *Christian*, considered *as* such;) the other, as an *excess* and abuse of that same feeling. The one may be compared to the fault of a citizen who is destitute of patriotism, and indifferent to the welfare of the state; the other, to that of the factious and rebellious, in whom a similar coalescing principle is directed to a different object, and pushed to a vicious extreme.

It has been already observed, that party-feeling is a source of disunion as well as of union,—of dissension as well as of agreement; since attachment to any party implies hostility to every opposed or rival party. And in addition to this, it has also been mentioned, as a part of our constitution, not only that men feel attachment to the party or community of which they are *already* members, but also that those who have any thing of doctrine, sentiment, or practice in common, are inclined to coalesce and combine together, into a body, and keep that body distinct from such as differ from them on these

points: when therefore this tendency is carried to excess, minor points of coincidence will unite with each other, and separate from the rest, part of the members of that body so formed: and hence it is the very nature of this feeling, when not duly controlled, to produce not only bitter animosity between opposite parties, but also internal divisions in each;—not only to inflame them one against another, but also to subdivide and multiply them; and thus to destroy its own works, by separating into hostile factions the very persons whom it had originally drawn together. Men are loth to recognize the operation of the same principle in different cases, when its operation is in the one beneficial, and in the other mischievous; but an attentive observer will be compelled to admit, that the same inclination to combine with those who agree with them on any point, or have any thing in common with them, and to keep apart from, or oppose, all others, together with a strong attachment to the party they belong to, has often led the same men, at one time to perform the most

important services to the state, in contests with foreign enemies, and, at another time, when uncontrolled by virtuous principle and sound discretion, to produce in that very state the most ruinous factions: and that the same spirit which supported the infant Church against its pagan enemies, became, when perverted and corrupted, the fruitful source (especially in the more flourishing state of the Church) of furious contentions, and obstinate schisms.

Our Lord, who saw the excesses and depravations to which party-feeling is liable, as well as its advantages,—its abuses as well as its utility,—charges his disciples to "have "peace one with another;" and offers up, in their presence, a solemn petition to the Father for their unity. And his apostles also are frequent and earnest in exhorting their converts to maintain the strictest union and most perfect concord among themselves, and to be on their guard against such as "caused divisions among them."

Those who, in their dread of strife and party-violence, would seek to preserve this union by abstaining from all mention of

every doctrine that is likely to afford matter of controversy,—by laying aside all formularies, and confessions of faith,—and by regarding with indifference all varieties of opinion among professors of Christianity,—would in fact put an end to the very existence of the society itself, whose integrity and concord they would preserve. In preventing hurtful contentions, by giving up every thing that is worth contending about, they would be rooting out the wheat along with the tares; and for the sake of extirpating noxious weeds, would be condemning the field to perpetual sterility. And after all, it would be but an apparent union that would result; since the members of the same nominal Church could have but little sympathy with each other's sentiments and designs, when they knew them to be essentially at variance with their own. It seems indeed little less than a contradiction, to speak of a religious community, whose members are radically different in religion.

We are not then to hold a society together by renouncing the objects of it; nor to part with our faith and our hope, as a means of attaining charity; but rather seek

to combine the three ; and by earnest zeal, without violence or bigotry,—by firmness, accompanied with moderation, discretion, and temper,—by conciliating adversaries, without sacrificing the truth,—and by hearty yet mild cooperation with friends, to obtain the advantages of party-feeling, yet avoid its evils ; and promote peace, without falling into indifference.

In most ages of Christianity indeed, the excess and abuse of party-feeling has been the more prevalent, or at least the more conspicuous, of the two opposite faults just noticed : and the cautions and admonitions of our Lord and his Apostles against it, are still as applicable as ever, and will continue to be so, as long as human nature shall remain the same. It is proposed then, in the remainder of these lectures, to offer some remarks on the evils which arise from the perversions and the inordinate violence of party-feeling, and on the means by which those evils may be prevented, or cured, or alleviated.

In the course of this discussion, my object will be, not to defend the faith against heretics, and the Church against separat-

ists, by bringing home the charge of error against the one, and of schism against the other; (for in this most important office, there are perhaps enough, who are, and have been, successfully employed;) but rather to warn the orthodox and the churchman against such errors in their *own* conduct as may occasion, or aggravate, or prolong, the evils of heresy and schism in others;—to examine, in short, and guard against the faults, not so much of our opponents, as of ourselves; a subject which is not at all less necessary to be attended to, than the other, but which is not so often discussed, and is much more likely to escape our attention. If it be possible (as it certainly is) that he who himself holds the truth, may contribute to occasion another's falling into error; and that a schismatical party may be produced, or its violence exasperated, or its existence protracted, by those who do not join it, it cannot but be of high importance to consider the means of avoiding such faults: especially when it is recollected, that the arguments used against adversaries, however sound and ingenious, may, in many instances, never reach

them at all; or when they do, will often be listened to with prejudice; so that frequently they will do little more than confirm those who are already convinced: whereas the admonitions addressed to our own brethren, will be likely to obtain a hearing at least, if not a favourable and a profitable hearing.

Before however we seek for preventives or remedies for a disease, it is desirable that we should thoroughly understand the nature of it. I propose therefore in the ensuing lecture to consider the nature and origin of the excess and abuse of party-feeling,—the combination of it with other principles of the human mind, and the effects to which it has led. May He of whose body we are members,—who has promised his support to the Church militant on earth,—and through whom we hope to join the Church triumphant in heaven,—vouchsafe to aid our exertions,—to direct our inquiries,—and to lead us, by his Spirit, into all truth!

LECTURE II.

PARTY-SPIRIT.

JAMES iii. 14—17.

If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

AS there is no original principle of our nature that is not designed to answer some good purpose, so there is none that is not liable to become mischievous, when ill-regulated, and misdirected, and excessive: and those which, under the control of moral principle and discretion, are the *most* beneficial, are commonly the most hurtful also, when they escape from that control. Such

accordingly is the case with that party-feeling which has been already described, as the principle which leads men readily to combine and embody themselves, in parties and societies, of various kinds;—which heightens their zeal in any *common* cause;—and which makes the *body* they belong to, an object of regard in itself, distinct from the individuals composing it: sometimes indeed when no regard is felt for *them;* nay, even when (from the nature of the case) each one of them is a rival, and an object of jealousy.

This principle then, under various names and characters, produces energy and co-operation in various departments of human life. In the form of patriotism, it preserves the existence, and promotes the prosperity of states; and in many other shapes also exerts a most extensive and important, and often, most salutary influence.

Its excesses and perversions are proportionably mischievous. It is liable not only to prevail in too great a degree, and become too predominant, but also to operate unduly, in cases where it ought to be ex-

cluded ; and to pursue its objects by improper means. All these may be called, (conformably to the received language of the best moral writers) *excesses* of various kinds ; in the same manner as we usually reckon among the *excesses* of anger, not only its extreme *violence*, but also, its being too easily *excited*,—too *permanent*,—directed to *wrong objects*,—and the like.

I. The most remarkable, and most properly characteristic, excess of party-feeling, is the tendency to *prefer the means to the end ;*—the permanence, and prosperity, and aggrandizement, of any party or society, to the objects themselves which it proposes, or professes to propose, and for the sake of which, it is established.

When men shew an extravagant and disproportionate eagerness for that which is the object of their joint efforts, it is not easy to pronounce how much of this fault is fairly to be laid to the account of excessive party-feeling, and how much may be attributed to an original over estimate of the end proposed : but when they become comparatively *indifferent* to that very end,

and yet still adhere and devote themselves to the party,—when (as is frequently the case) the original purpose seems nearly or entirely forgotten, by every member of the body, and yet the body itself still holds together in full force, and maintains its distinct existence,—we may then decidedly call such a disposition an excess of party-feeling; and something of this nature is usually intended by the term, *party-spirit;* that name being most commonly applied in an unfavourable sense.

Instances of this are very numerous. Many remarkable ones have occurred among the Jesuits, who having been formed into a compact and carefully-regulated society, evinced a proportionate degree of the party-zeal and attachment which are thus generated and kept alive. Had their object been originally the propagation and maintenance of the Gospel of Him whose name they adopted, and had they kept steadily to that object, the institution might have been highly beneficial. But, as in other cases, so, most remarkably in this, zeal for the security and influence of their

order, nearly swallowed up their zeal for their own professed object: they were often ready to compromise the cause of religion, for the sake of advancing the interests of the body: and there are even said to have been individuals among them, who were ready to sacrifice in the cause of the society, every selfish object,—every comfort and enjoyment of life, and even life itself, though at the same time they were not even believers in the truth of Christianity.

Thus too, examples abound in every page of history, and present themselves continually before our eyes, of men who with little or no mixture of personal motives, but acting almost entirely from a perverted patriotism, are ready to sacrifice without scruple, for the glory and aggrandizement of the state, not only themselves, but also the lives, and the property, and the happiness of their fellow-citizens, (considered individually,) though the security of these is the very object of civil society.

One circumstance which most especially tends to lead the members of any party into a forgetfulness of their legitimate and ori-

ginal purpose, is the necessity, or at least expediency, of paying attention to other objects, distinct from this. Almost every society has some regulations and institutions, whose immediate end is the preservation of the society, and which have no intrinsic value; like the fortifications of a town, which are worthless in themselves, but are essential to the security of the citizens' habitations and goods; and whose defence is therefore the more carefully attended to, because, were these abandoned, nothing would remain that could be effectually defended. Of this character are many parts of the constitution of our own country, and of other states; which have no *immediate* tendency to increase the happiness of the subject, but only, to maintain a proper balance in the government,—to secure the due enactment and administration of laws,—and in short, to preserve the society in its existing form: these accordingly are guarded with commendable vigilance, as important rights, and are sometimes termed, not improperly, the *bulwarks* of the constitution.

Moreover, it is generally found desirable that a party should have some external marks and badges of distinction,—often an arbitrary symbol,—to indicate their internal sentiments and dispositions; that the members of it may be kept apart from others, and mutually known among themselves, and held together. These are like the standards in an army; which the soldiers are taught to defend at all hazards, because, though, in themselves, not worth defending, they are the signs by which they are to distinguish friend from foe, and by which they are to be kept together in proper order. Accordingly we find the members of any sect, society, or other body of men, (especially if living mingled with others,) always disposed to adopt as a mark, either some peculiarity in their language, habit, or mode of living, or the observance of some peculiar ceremony, often having as little *natural* connexion with the objects of the party, as the military standard has with war.

All these signs of distinction have the effect, not only of keeping the party united and entire, but also of increasing men's

attachment to it. The human mind is so formed, as to take an interest in every thing that is, in any way, a *peculiarity;* and party-feeling is roused and invigorated by every circumstance which *reminds* the partisans of their being a distinct body, and of the tie subsisting between them.

And here it may be worth while to remark, by the way, that one advantage, at least, of the numerous ceremonies and marks of distinction which were enjoined to the Israelites, may be perceived from what has been just mentioned. A small nation, surrounded by idolaters, whose profane rites had so much that was seductive to uncultivated minds, needed something more to preserve them from contamination, than the intrinsic purity and sublimity of their religion: every distinctive sign or observance that could remind them hourly of their being a peculiar people, and separate them widely from the rest of mankind, was requisite to preserve the essential parts of their institutions from being lost or corrupted.

Now as every thing that men have been

long accustomed to prize and regard, (from whatever cause,) becomes endeared to them by association, and at length appears, in their eyes, intrinsically precious, we need not wonder at finding that these secondary objects of a society, when they have occupied (as must frequently be the case) the larger portion of their attention, should in time come to be regarded as *primary;* and should at length usurp an undue portion, if not the whole, of their regard;—that while the fortifications (to pursue the illustrations above employed) are sedulously guarded and kept in repair, the city itself should be suffered to fall to decay; and that men should cling to their standard, while they forget the cause in which they were enlisted, or remember it only as a pretext, without any sincere and hearty attachment to it. This may well be called, in St. James's words, "lying against the truth," and "hypocrisy."

This undue preference then of the means to the end,—of the distinctions of a party, to the original purpose of it,—may be regarded as one grand characteristic of party-spirit.

II. Another kind of excess which deservedly bears the same name, consists in an over readiness to *form* and fall into parties, on frivolous grounds or on improper occasions; by which it often happens, (as was remarked in a former discourse,) that a society is broken up by the undue operation of the same principle that originally helped to form and maintain it; and perhaps, while weakened by these groundless internal divisions, and split into a multitude of petty factions, falls an easy prey to some common enemy, whom its combined force might have resisted.

III. Lastly, party-spirit is justly charged upon those who go all lengths of bigoted partiality and narrow-minded prejudice, in matters relating to their party;—who are wanting in candour and charity towards those of another party, and unfair in any contest with them; who are strangers, in short, to that "wisdom from above, which is "not only peaceable and gentle," but also "without *partiality*."

The great historian of Greece [a], who

[a] Thucyd. b. 3.

described, with such frightful vividness of colouring, the political party-spirit of his own times, and who pronounced, with the prophetic power which results from wide experience, acute observation, and sound judgment, that the like would be ever liable to recur, though in various forms and degrees, has proved but too true a prophet. Much of his description may be applied with very slight, or without any, alteration, to many subsequent periods, not excepting the present; and especially in what relates to that kind of party-spirit which has been last mentioned. No assurances, he says, or pledges, of either party, could gain credit with the other; the most reasonable proposals, coming from an opponent, were received, not with candour, but with suspicion; no artifice was reckoned dishonourable, by which a point could be carried; all recommendation of moderate measures was reckoned a mark, either of cowardice, or of insincerity;—he only was accounted a thoroughly safe man, whose violence was blind and boundless;—and those who en-

deavoured to steer a middle course, were spared by neither side.

It is worth remarking also, with reference to the branch of party-spirit formerly noticed, how completely the welfare of the state, (the professed object of each party,) was sacrificed without hesitation by both; nay, how each so far forgot their originally *real* object, a preponderance in the government of an independent state, that each, by turns, were ready to subject *themselves*, as well as their fellow-citizens, to a foreign yoke.

That all this should sound as much like a prophecy concerning the affairs of the Christian Church, as a narrative of what took place in the secular affairs of heathens, is matter of sorrow, of shame, and of wonder. They indeed were not ignorant of the evil of such conduct; but they had not such strong motives for abstaining from it: they knew that "where envying and "strife is, there is confusion and every evil "work;" but they knew not that "the wis-"dom which is peaceable and gentle, de-

"scendeth from above,"—from Him who has promised so richly to reward it; they knew not *whose* children the peacemakers should be called; nor the blessing pronounced upon the merciful. But the fact is, Christians, as well as Pagans, are apt to apply their knowledge of what is right and wrong, to the case of their neighbours, instead of their own; and to employ their moral judgment in detecting and justly censuring the faults of the opposite party, while they are blind to the same faults in themselves. No improvement in religious and moral knowledge (if we thus look only to the mote in our brother's eye) can answer any purpose, but to increase our condemnation.

Besides the faults already mentioned, as, properly speaking, excesses of party-feeling itself, there are many other propensities also, which have an especial tendency to mix themselves with this feeling,—to call it into action,—and to aggravate its mischiefs. Such are VANITY and AMBITION; fondness for NOVELTY; love of DISPUTATION, in those who are, or believe themselves, skilful disputants; and lastly, that

PROUD SPIRIT, which delights in humbling, mortifying, and insulting others, and triumphs in taking vengeance for any opposition or affront.

Both the love of power and the love of fame, are so effectually gratified by a man's being one of the leaders or principal supporters of a party, that he has hence an obvious temptation to *form* or to cherish a party, in order to increase his own influence, and shew his importance; especially if (as is often the case) no other avenues to power and distinction appear to lie open to him. And many, doubtless, who have been influenced by these or other corrupt motives, have been themselves by no means aware of the bias under which they were acting; but have effectually deceived their own consciences, by exaggerating, to themselves, as well as to others, the importance of the cause they were engaged in[b].

Again, the love of novelty,—the pleasure men have in the idea of being original-

[b] Wesley seems to have been, in a most remarkable degree, unconscious of the ambitious feelings by which he was so much influenced.

thinkers, or, at least, of being able to shake off established prejudices,—to judge for themselves, and to despise the notions of the vulgar,—these, have a strong tendency to induce men to broach new doctrines or schemes of their own, or to adopt those proposed by another; and thus to create and strengthen parties [c].

Controversial ability also, real or supposed, contributes powerfully to generate, and keep up, and inflame party-spirit, by creating in the able disputant a fondness for controversy [d]; in the same manner as the possession of military skill, and the command of warlike troops, is apt to encourage a delight in war. Every one naturally feels a pleasure in doing that which he is conscious of doing well, especially if it be what has long been his accustomed employment. And though no one probably ever

[c] Priestley, and many other unitarian writers, afford some of the most striking instances of the operation of this principle.

[d] Many examples might be found among the metaphysical theologians who have written on the Calvinistic questions.

acknowledged, even to himself, a feeling of mortification at the abolition of a party, and the dropping of a controversy, which might have employed the eloquence of his tongue and pen, or a regret that his sword should rust in inglorious peace, yet no one who is acquainted with human nature, can doubt the existence of such feelings.

Now controversy being almost always either the offspring or the parent of party, it is not wonderful that a love of disputation should almost always either give occasion to, or exasperate, party-spirit. And that the most trifling subject (if no more important one be at hand) will furnish, to those who are so disposed, matter for furious debate, division into factions, and narrow-minded bigotry, is remarkably exemplified in the celebrated dispute between the Realists and Nominalists, which so long and so vehemently agitated the public mind, till the reformation quelled it, by diverting the attention of the disputants to a more interesting subject: a sufficient proof that Religion was not the *cause* of these acrimonious contests, but only furnished

the matter of them;—it was the field on which the combatants engaged, but did not excite them to the battle.

Lastly, all the proud, insolent, and resentful feelings of mankind, and the delight they take in triumphing over an opponent, have a powerful influence (when men are once engaged) in keeping up and embittering the spirit of party. Their zeal and animosity, however small at first, are inflamed by opposition; and they become attached to the party in whose ranks they have *fought*. If there be not, as some have supposed, a love of contention for its own sake, inherent in some men, it is certain that a haughty resentment of every provocation, and a delight in humbling, mortifying, and triumphing over, an adversary, are dispositions but too general. Now the breaking down of party distinctions, and the silencing of controversy, destroys the hope of such triumphs; and every kind of compromise and concession is most revolting to a proud, angry, and jealous spirit. These haughty and insolent passions therefore, as well as those above mentioned,

contribute greatly to call forth, and to cherish party-spirit, which, in turn, fosters and inflames *them*. Intemperate violence and bitterness of hostility has indeed been above reckoned as itself one of the excesses of party-feeling: and in fact, the influence of the malevolent passions and of party-spirit on each other being mutual, men are sometimes, by their attachment to a party, led to indulge in a malignant triumph, and sometimes, by their delight in such a triumph, become attached to a party.

A long catalogue of other feelings might be added, which under particular circumstances, and in particular individuals, tend to promote party-spirit, and to aggravate its mischiefs; but these which have been mentioned are not such as are *occasionally* and *accidentally* connected with it, but are its natural forerunners or concomitants, whatever be the nature of the party, of the cause, or of the contests it leads to.

The baneful *effects* of party-spirit, and its train of accompanying evil passions, are too common (unhappily) and well-known

especially in the Christian Church, to need being much insisted on. In fact, ecclesiastical history consists mainly of a detail of them.

1. Of these effects, the most obvious and the most shocking, is the extinction of Christian Charity,—of that spirit of meekness, forbearance, and benevolence, which are characteristic of the Gospel. If one should go through St. Paul's description of charity, reversing every point in the detail, he would have no incorrect description of party-spirit, as it has appeared in almost all ages of the Church.—Party-spirit is *not* "long suffering nor kind:" party-spirit "envieth, vaunteth itself, is puffed up;" (making men feel a pride in their own party, and hostile jealousy towards all others.) "Party-spirit seeketh her own;" (narrowing men's views to the welfare of their party, and inclining them to sacrifice the interests of all others to it;) "Party-spirit is easily provoked; thinketh evil;" (being ever ready to attribute to an adversary the worst motives and designs;) "rejoiceth in iniquity, and rejoiceth not in

"the truth;" catching eagerly at every unfair advantage, and leading to an indifference about Gospel-truth, which was the object originally professed.

What bitter animosity and alienation of the minds of Christians from each other have arisen from this spirit,—what mutual revilings and anathemas;—what wars and massacres, oppression and persecution have ensued, it is unnecessary, as it would be painful to describe:—painful, not so much because Christians were the *objects*, as because they were the *authors*, of these cruelties: for that our Lord's followers should suffer from hatred and malice, is no more than they were taught, by Him, occasionally to expect; but that they should themselves be the prey of such evil passions, against which He so earnestly warned them, and should substitute intestine "strife, and "confusion, and every evil work," for the "peace which He left with them," is matter of grievous disappointment, and of shame.

2. The Scandal to the cause of truth

which hence arises, is another, and one of the heaviest evils of party-spirit: the acrimonious, and often frivolous, contests among Christians, and the bigotry and mutual hatred between sects, have always been matter of scornful triumph to the infidel, and a stumbling-block to the weak; and this the more, inasmuch as it is those who are *seemingly* most zealous in the cause of religion, that display the most of this fault: and hence we hear it commonly said, "these very *good* people who talk so much "about a Christian spirit, are quite as "harsh in their judgments and as bitter "against their opponents, as the most un-"godly: their religion therefore serves only "to sour their temper; or, at best, their "professions are but mere cant and pre-"tence." And thus Christianity is regarded as the source of those evils, for which her genuine spirit, if really dwelling in our hearts, is the most effectual cure. The reproach is indeed unjust; since experience shews that any human transactions and opinions, however trifling, may serve as a basis from which this spirit may arise

in all its extravagance and violence: but still the scandal *will exist;* and whatever condemnation *they* incur who transfer to the religion, the censure which is due to its professors,—or whatever certainty we may feel that such stumbling-blocks shall always be to be found, by those who seek for them,—still there is not therefore the less heavy judgment to be looked for by those who "give occasion to the enemies of the "Lord to blaspheme." "It must needs "be that offences come; but woe to that "man by whom the offence cometh."

3. Lastly, another evil effect of party-spirit is the establishment and propagation of Error. Falsehood, like poison, will generally be rejected when administered alone; but when blended with wholesome ingredients, may be swallowed unperceived. The mixture of truth and falsehood in the fallacious arguments of the sophist, is one way in which this may be effected: another is, the connection of sound and erroneous notions, from their being both held by the same party. It is notorious that each mem-

ber of any religious or other party usually adopts their doctrines and practices, in the mass; feeling himself bound, (as it were, by his allegiance to it,) to make no exceptions, and distinctions; and regarding *him* as an adversary in disguise, who would analyse this compound, and try each point separately by the test of reason or of revelation. Whatever therefore may chance to be *wrong*, in this *set* of opinions and principles, is likely to pass unobserved, or to be disguised as to its real character by its artificial connection with so much that he has been accustomed to venerate.

It is true indeed that *sound* doctrines also, and valuable precepts, may in this way find admittance with some, who might otherwise have rejected them; but while this advantage is enjoyed by truth and falsehood alike, we cannot but acknowledge (if we allow truth to be in itself the stronger) that whatever tends thus to put them on a level, is, on the whole, less favorable to the cause of truth, than of error. Not to mention that what is thus admitted in the mass, without separate attention and examin-

ation, even though it chance to be true and right, cannot have the same beneficial effect on the mind as if it were left to stand on its own claims, and were received *because* it is true and right.

And hence, it is a great recommendation of our Church, that She appeals in all things to the Scriptures, the only collection of unmixed and infallible truth; and challenges a trial of her doctrines and practices, both collectively and separately, by that test. Had She (like the Church of Rome) demanded unhesitating assent to them on her own authority, even though She had been free from all the errors which, in that church, have been blended with the truth, and as it were sanctified by their union with it, still our belief and our practice would not have been so properly scriptural, nor so profitable to ourselves [a].

[a] Those therefore (it may be observed by the way) who, on any question that arises, appeal, at once, and finally, to what our Church teaches, urging that they have been long since fully and fairly convinced of her conformity to Scripture, and that therefore they may safely acquiesce in her decision; though they eventually arrive at a true conclusion, are not proceeding in the

The principal ill-effects of party-spirit may be classed under the three heads just mentioned; *viz.* 1st. The uncharitable temper which it generates and fosters; 2dly. The scandal and scorn it occasions in the "minds of them that are without;" and 3dly. The tendency it has to disguise, and propagate, and support, error.

I have endeavoured also to sketch out the character of those excesses themselves which are deservedly stigmatized under the name of party-spirit; as consisting either in a preference of the means to the end;—(of the institutions and the distinctions of a party, to its original object)—or in an over-readiness to form parties on slight occasions; or in a bigoted attachment to our own party, and excessive hostility against its rivals. And the other passions were

way most conformable to the spirit of our Church, nor most conducive to her honour. Let them search the Scriptures themselves, with candour and diligence; secure that the conclusions fairly drawn from them, cannot of course be at variance with the doctrines of an orthodox Church: which doctrines will therefore derive confirmation from such an enquiry, when their conformity to Scripture is thus exhibited.

also enumerated which most tend to engender and aggravate party-spirit; *viz.* men's ambition of being leaders or active supporters of a party, with a view to power or credit; fondness for novelty; the love of disputation; and delight in triumphing over and insulting opponents.

The Church of Christ, which is the society, or body, to which we belong, is, in itself, and to those who are imbued with the genuine spirit of it, peculiarly safe from all these excesses; much as it has suffered from them, through the frail and corrupt nature of its members. For in the first place, its ultimate object, the salvation of souls, is not one which, from its *own character*, is liable to be lost sight of; since it is one which *ought* at least to occupy more earnest and sedulous attention than all others besides: moreover, its internal union, and the avoiding of causeless divisions, are inculcated by its divine Founder and his followers, upon the most powerful motives, when they teach all Christians to regard themselves as sons of the same heavenly Father,—sanctified by the same Spi-

rit,—members of Christ's body, and joint-heirs with Him of immortality. Nor can any society be, in itself, less liable to uncharitable bigotry than that which aims at embracing all mankind,—and *that*, with a view to their own present and future happiness; and whose prescribed and appropriate means of accomplishing this, are, mild persuasion, and good example. And lastly, it is a society, whose essential character and spirit is especially and decidedly opposed to the indulgence of such evil passions as inordinate ambition and vanity,—or an idle craving after *novelties* of our own devising, while the infallible and *final* revelation of God's will is before us;—or a disputatious, and a resentful and insolent temper.

If therefore (as unhappily is too often the case) the Christian religion has been made the occasion of "envying and strife," and the Church, a scene of "confusion and every evil work," the fault lies with Christians themselves; and frequently (as was formerly remarked) with *both* of two opposite parties;—with the intemperate and in-

judicious of the orthodox, as well as with the heterodox;—with those who provoke and aggravate schism, as well as those who join in it.

It will be the object (as was formerly intimated) of the ensuing lectures, to suggest such cautions and rules of conduct as may be useful in preventing or alleviating the various evils of party-spirit, both by checking the excessive tendency to create, or keep up, parties and controversies, on insufficient grounds; and also by introducing, as far as is possible, moderation and discretion into the conduct of those already subsisting.

But there is an objection, which (as it stands on the threshold) it may be as well, before we enter on this branch of the design, to touch upon slightly, though it will be more fully considered hereafter. There are many who contend that all the evils arising from party are chargeable on that party who are in the wrong; because one party requires to be opposed by another: they urge, that, "if bad men combine, "good men must unite," for self-defence;

since otherwise, the advocates of error, though fewer in number, and weaker in their cause, may, by acting in concert, prevail over the defenders of truth, when scattered, and, as it were, fighting in detail: nor must we, they add, deal too favourably with any adverse party; and too readily quash controversy with them, on account of their errors not appearing at first sight very important or dangerous; because we know not what excesses they may hereafter (if they gain strength) be drawn into, by the influence of their leaders. We must watch therefore, say they, and combine to oppose, the smallest beginnings of heresy and schism; considering not merely the magnitude of the errors which our opponents openly maintain, but of all those likewise which, (in our judgment) are of a kindred nature, and which consequently we may expect, ultimately to result from them.

Now that there is a great portion of truth in these arguments, if rightly explained and duly modified, is undeniable: and it will be allowed, I trust, that whatever there *is* of truth in them, has been, not admitted

merely, but enforced and insisted on, in this, and still more in the preceding, discourse; in which the uses of party-feeling were pointed out,—the benefits resulting from the institution of the Christian Church fully dwelt upon, and the recommendations of our own genuine and apostolical branch of it, set forth. While we adhere therefore not only to the Christian faith, but to the society which Christ established, and to the ordinances and institutions of our own Church, as deriving legitimately from Him all the authority it pretends to exercise, we are, so far, conforming to the principles of the argument before us. But it is plain that these principles, pushed to an extreme, and applied without any modification, will justify the formation of parties, and the excitement and prolongation of controversies for every cause, however slight; and will thus introduce into the Church of Christ innumerable divisions and interminable strife.—For if all the evils of party are to be laid to the account of those whom we think in the wrong, (*i. e. of our opponents*) the inevitable consequence must be, that we

shall see no need for any caution against these evils, in our *own* conduct: if we are to consider merely the danger of suffering an adverse or suspected party to gain strength by being *neglected*, without taking into account also the danger of strengthening, irritating, or even generating, a hostile party, by *opposition*, we shall be perpetually provoking schisms, and widening every breach, and bringing on, in short, the very diseases we are professing to cure. And if we are to reckon ourselves at full liberty to charge men with bad designs, and their doctrines with bad tendencies, which are not obviously apparent, nor avowed, we shall often be the means of aggravating the errors we injudiciously oppose, and creating the heresies we rashly impute; not to mention the violation of Christian charity we are guilty of, and the angry contentions we give rise to.

The tendency however of such conduct as this, may be learnt from experience as well as conjecture. Its effects have been abundantly tried; for it has been common in all ages of the Church; and an attentive

study of history will convince us that it has eradicated very few heresies and schisms, compared with those it has produced and exasperated.

It is our present object to seek out a middle course between this fault and its opposite;—between narrow-minded bigotry and intemperate party-spirit, on the one hand, and careless indifference on the other. I am well aware however that it is impossible, from the nature of the case, to do more towards this object than suggest *general* observations, and lay down general rules, which must be applied, in each individual instance, by each individual's attentive judgment, and good-sense. Even were the highest degree of learning, wisdom, and eloquence employed in such a task, it could not, here, supply, in any degree, the want of private discretion. It must not however be hence concluded that all attention to such general remarks and maxims, is useless. For, in fact, the same objection (if it be any) will lie against all moral precepts whatever. When ethical writers, for example, instruct us to steer a middle course

between avarice and profusion, or cowardice and rashness, and describe to us these opposite extremes, they are compelled, after all, to leave it to our individual discretion to decide in each single case that occurs, whether the danger is to be shunned or encountered,—the profit, to be sought, or rejected. Even the law of the land, when it defines what sort of wrongs shall be entitled to compensation, is forced to leave a discretionary power for deciding what actions come under its definitions, and what compensation shall be awarded in each. In like manner, both our Lord and his apostles lay down general precepts, which no one would presume to call useless, yet which it rests with our own common sense to apply in each instance: they exhort men to rebuke a brother when in fault; yet forbid us to be rash or severe in judging another;—they urge us to be zealous for the faith, yet to be gentle, peaceable, and ready to make allowances;—to oppose and separate ourselves from heretics; yet to avoid strife and divisions: with innumerable other rules of the same kind,

which they (necessarily) leave us to apply, for ourselves, in practice, according to the best of our own judgment.

It may be useful however to make these general precepts somewhat *less* general, by so developing the principles of them as to apply them to our own times and circumstances, and thus obtain the full benefit of apostolical instruction. And such is the design of these lectures, as far as relates to the proposed subject of party-spirit and controversy.

In the ensuing discourse, the requisite cautions relative to the temper of our own minds will be considered: and afterwards, those relating to our treatment of others.

I will conclude by reminding you, that however little hope any individual may feel of being able, by his own exertions and example, materially to diminish the evils of party-spirit, it is not the less important to *him*, individually, that he should use his best endeavours against those evils; and at least keep *himself* clear of any share in producing them; "Be not thou," says St. Paul, "a partaker in other men's sins;

"keep thyself pure." However great and incurable these sins may be, he who has had no share in them, will be saved from sharing in their punishment; and he who has done his best, however ineffectually, to lessen them, will be not the less amply rewarded by Him who "seeth in secret,"—who is Himself the dispenser of success or failure,—and who alone can fully estimate our intentions.

LECTURE III.

A CARNAL MIND THE CAUSE OF DIVISIONS.

1 Cor. iii. 3.

Whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

THE carnal mind of which St. Paul here speaks, and which he elsewhere calls "death," and declares to be a state of "enmity against God," consists, evidently, (according to the Apostle's use of the expression,) in a predominance of the base and corrupt propensities of unregenerate human nature;—that sinful nature which we inherit from our first parents, and which he sometimes designates by the appellation of "the old man, which is corrupt accord-"ing to the deceitful lusts;" as distinguished from "the new man, which after God is "created in righteousness and true holi-

" ness;"—that state in which all those evil passions are subdued by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, and the whole heart subjected to the dominion of Christ.

To the depraved views then, and sinful desires of the natural man, unrenewed by the grace of the Gospel, the Apostle attributes the divisions which prevailed at Corinth: St. James also speaks the same language, when he says, " From whence " come wars and fightings among you? " come they not hence, even of your lusts?" And it is worth remarking that neither Apostle is, in that place, charging his hearers with holding heretical opinions, nor blaming one sect in particular; but rebuking them generally for party-spirit and discord; which they attribute to a " carnal " mind," and corrupt passions.

And accordingly various passions are found, under different circumstances, to lead men into the faults here censured;—to sow divisions among them,—combine them in sects or factions,—and inflame them

with party-hatred against each other. Sometimes self-interest [a] may chance to be the first mover of discord; sometimes even timidity will induce men to join a party, that they may avoid the censure and ill will of its members. Such appears to have been the case with St. Peter on the occasion where he incurred St. Paul's rebuke, for his weak compliance with the prejudices of the Judaizing Christians, in separating himself from the gentile converts who did not comply with the Mosaic law; and thus fostering the schism which was then growing into strength.

The evil passions however which are more peculiarly and intimately connected with party-spirit, together with those depraved views, and excesses of feeling and of conduct, which may properly be regarded as *constituting* that spirit, are those

[a] It happens but too often, it is to be feared, that a dissenting chapel is regarded as a profitable speculation, by such persons as St. Paul describes 1 Tim. vi. 5. "of "corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," "νομιζόντων "πορισμὸν εἶναι τὴν εὐσέβειαν, looking upon religion as a "gainful occupation;" for so the passage ought evidently to be rendered.

which were noticed in the last lecture; and it was there proposed, that (those faults having been characterised, and their tendency pointed out) we should next inquire for the best methods of preventing or lessening them; and should consider in the first place the requisite cautions, as to the temper of our own minds, for avoiding the evils in question.

No one indeed who calls himself a Christian, can seriously question the necessity of putting on a Christian temper; nor can any one who candidly examines his Bible, find any difficulty in ascertaining what that temper is; but those who have persuaded themselves that all the mischiefs of party are to be charged on those who in point of opinion are on the wrong side, (*i. e.* in other words, on their opponents,) will be apt to take but little care as to the spirit that actuates themselves: men must be first convinced how wrong those may be in disposition and conduct, who are on the right side, before they can be brought to that candid self-examination, and diligent watchfulness, which are necessary in order

to derive practical benefit from the precepts of Scripture.

I. The desire of taking the lead, was mentioned as one of the passions which most frequently aid in producing and keeping alive the spirit of party. And it is one which must be carefully watched, and strenuously repressed by the Christian; since it will be continually springing up as temptations occur, and not only leading frequently to mischievous results, but corrupting the motives of even our best actions. Even he who has engaged in the best cause with the best intentions, when he finds himself likely to obtain fame or influence, will often be deceived, by the desire of these so intruding itself into his mind, as in time to encroach upon, and at length supplant, his original honest zeal. His principle of action will thus have become "carnal," even while his conduct remains the same; and he will "walk as "men," even while engaged in the service of God. But, if rivals should then spring up, who threaten to eclipse his reputation

and curtail his influence, such a man will be very likely to find some pretence for raising a party, that he may be the leader: for Cæsar was not the only man who would rather be the first in a village than the second at Rome: and by thus creating a schism, he will infect with the spirit of party, not only himself, but as many followers as he can collect. To this source St. Paul traces expressly many of the divisions which prevailed in his own days; the authors of which he designates as ambitious "to make a fair shew in the flesh;" and "desiring to have the Galatians circum-"cised, that they might glory in their "flesh;" *i. e.* that they might not only escape persecution, and gain credit with the Jews, for subjecting gentiles to the law; but also might have converts of their own to boast of.

Accordingly our Lord was careful to repress the first germs of this spirit in his disciples, who very early manifested a tendency towards it. "There was a strife "among them," we are told, "which of "them should be accounted the greatest;"

on which occasion he tells them, "He that "is greatest among you, let him be as the "younger; and he that is chief, as he that "doth serve." And on another occasion, he corrects this temper in them, by setting a child in the midst of them, as a pattern of that lowliness which he required of them. Against so besetting and so dangerous a sin it is necessary to be always on our guard; not only by strict and frequent self-examination as to the purity of our motives, and fervent prayer for genuine and single-hearted zeal, but sometimes also by concealing something of the beneficial influence we may be exerting, when we can do so without diminishing that benefit; and by studiously putting forward others, not only to aid in our labours, but also to take a share in the credit of them, if it be so great as would be likely, if undivided, to intoxicate our minds with pride, and thus to corrupt our motives.

And since even those who do not aspire to be *leaders* of a party, often feel their importance increased, and their self-estimation flattered by being active members of

it, especially if it be a *small* party, and they are thus more effectually separated from the common mass, we must be careful to guard against the excess of this feeling also, and to keep in subjection the carnal temper, of loving for its own sake to be of consequence, and to be in any way distinguished.

II. The love of novelty is another powerful and general principle of our nature, whose tendency to create and foster divisions in the Church, was above adverted to. That a great portion of mankind have a delight in striking out, or adopting, some new idea, even though it have little else to recommend it, is notorious, and is exemplified by numberless instances both in philosophy and in the common affairs of life: but perhaps there is no instance of it so remarkable as the heresies which arose in the Christian Church, during the life-time of the Apostles: those who had received the faith from the mouths of men who wrought miracles in confirmation of their divine commission, were yet led away by giving ear to the daring innovators whom St. Paul

complains of as "preaching other doc-
"trine" from his own; and who corrupted with their own idle devices the pure stream of divine truth, even close to the fountain-head. "The time will come," says he to Timothy, "when they will not endure
"sound doctrine, but after their own lusts
"will heap up to themselves teachers, hav-
"ing itching ears; and they will turn away
"their ears from the truth, and will be
"turned unto fables."

At the various fanciful systems therefore which have *since* arisen, and have flourished, each in its day, to the detriment of Christian truth and unity, we need not wonder. And especially was that to be expected which took place at the reformation; when so many changes were necessary, in order to get rid of the corruptions introduced by the Romish Church, that those who were not strictly on their guard against the love of innovation, naturally caught at the opportunity of rushing into every new-devised extravagance of doctrine or practice that pleased their intoxicated fancy. All freedom of discussion had been so long

bound up, as it were, in the icy fetters of Popish thraldom, that when these were suddenly dissolved and broken up, it was nothing strange if a furious flood burst forth, which for a time spread general devastation and confusion; and of whose ravage many sad vestiges remain to the present day. We cannot therefore too much admire the moderation of *our* Reformers, who maintained their calm good sense and the rationality of their zeal, in the midst of such prevailing wildness and turbulence: they seem to have had no craving after novelty for its own sake, and (unlike those who rejected every thing connected with the ancient abuses) *they* never altered for the sake of altering; but kept steadily in view their original object of rejecting only what had been the mischievous *innovations* of the Romanists, and *restoring* the Church of Christ to its original purity.

But the danger which they withstood, though then peculiarly strong, is not now, nor ever will be, removed, while human nature remains the same. Most sedulously are we still bound to guard against the

temptation of novelty, when we consider that it had power to seduce even the hearers of the Apostles themselves.

With this view, we must constantly bear in mind, that however the case may be with other subjects, in Religion, whatever appears to be new, (if it relate to any point of considerable importance,) carries with it, so far, a presumption against its being right. In philosophy, we know not that there may not hereafter be discoveries made, even of greater magnitude and importance than all that have gone before: so that, there, though a rash prejudice in favour of every thing new, is to be avoided, the pursuit of novelty and of truth may often chance to coincide: in Religion, on the contrary, a full and final revelation having been made, no discovery, properly so called, (of any high importance,) is to be expected; not merely because the book which contains all we know of the divine will has been so long before us, (for so also has the book of nature, in which nevertheless we are daily reading new truths, which had escaped the researches of our predecessors,) but because

that book was designed by the Almighty to convey such instruction as He judged needful for all; which purpose it would not have answered, had its true meaning in essential points been hidden till now. If therefore, for instance, a new mode of interpreting or of translating Scripture be proposed to us, which materially alters its doctrines from what have been uniformly received, we have no need (however plausible it may appear) to rest the question upon critical researches into the ancient languages; our ready answer may be, that Plato or Aristotle indeed may have designed to write mysteriously, and to conceal their doctrines from all but the most acute philosophers; and that Polybius or Livy may have been accidentally misunderstood, till modern researches cleared up their narratives; but that if the true sense and doctrine of the Bible was not understood by any, for so many centuries, it cannot be called (at least a final) *Revelation*. Elucidations indeed of minor points may be looked for, and may be very valuable;—fresh topics of evidence may be expected

(in these later times) to supply the defect of recent miracles;—prophecies may become intelligible by their fulfilment;—and fresh arguments in support of the essential doctrines may be brought forward. All this furnishes ample scope for the utmost conceivable ingenuity and originality of thought: the unremitting labours of a whole life would be insufficient for accomplishing all that would be desirable on each of these points; so that no excuse is left for indolence and contented ignorance: but still, unless our faith be the same in the main, with that of the early Christians, we may be well assured that it is unsound.

We should studiously repress therefore all craving "to be wise above that which "is written;" and endeavour to divert into some other channel any eager desire we may naturally and reasonably feel for discovering (what may be strictly called) new truths: a boundless field lies open before us; nor need we fear that the stores of useful knowledge to be drawn from the study of nature and of science, will ever be exhausted.

III. A similar procedure may perhaps be sometimes adopted with advantage, when we are taking precautions to guard ourselves against another fault, often connected with the foregoing, a love of disputation. He who is conscious of being a skilful and successful disputant, if, on candid and careful self-examination, he find himself tempted, by the desire of exercising his talent, to raise or prolong controversies unnecessarily, and thus excite or keep up a spirit of party, in himself or in others, will do well to direct his attention to other subjects, on which he may innocently, and even usefully, employ his acuteness in argument. Above all, let him never venture to frame and bring forward arguments, on any point connected with religion, contrary to his real sentiments, and with a view of merely exercising his skill, by trying what can be said on that side of the question; for it is very likely that he may thus be ensnared by his own ingenuity, and adopt in earnest the erroneous conclusions he has been defending in sport, through a partial admiration of the plausibility of his own arguments.

It is however the more difficult to keep clear of the fault now under consideration, because controversy is sometimes necessary, for the defence of our own faith against assailants, and the correction of the errors of others: and it becomes difficult to restrain within due bounds those who have been thus, as it were, trained to war, and to keep them from taking a delight in controversy; so that even their instructions will be delivered with something of a polemical air; and they will often (to say nothing of the other dangers above alluded to) provoke hostility, by seeming to court it. The greater the difficulty however, the more unremitting is the care demanded of us; we must continually examine our own hearts, whether our zeal be purely for the good cause, or for the controversy itself, which we are engaged in;—whether we are seeking such arguments as we verily think most likely to convince the erroneous, or such as will be the most approved and admired by our own party, and the bye-standers;—whether we are adopting the most persuasive and conciliatory forms of

expression, and modes of procedure, or the most brilliant and striking;—whether, in short, we are labouring for truth alone, or for triumph.

IV. The disposition last alluded to,—the love of triumph,—the desire of displaying our superiority, or of revenging an affront by mortifying and humbling an opponent, has been formerly mentioned as one of those evil passions which the most frequently promote and embitter party-spirit; and it is but too common an accompaniment of a disputatious temper: he who delights in argument, will exult in the display of his skill, rather than mourn over the faults of the misguided; and, seeking victory rather than truth, will take more pleasure in exposing and confounding, than in mildly reclaiming them.

How utterly contrary such a temper is to the whole spirit of Christianity, is too obvious to need being insisted on. He who can contemplate the Son of God weeping over Jerusalem, the scene of such perverse past opposition, and of his impending crucifixion, and can hear the awful appeal of

St. Paul, "Who made thee to differ from "another? or what hast thou that thou "didst not receive?" yet can proudly triumph in his own supposed rectitude, and insult the errors of a vanquished opponent, may perhaps be an acute theologian, but can have very little of the heart of a Christian. A man of such a temper indeed will generally do more harm than good to his own cause; but if he should chance to be the instrument of benefit to the Church, he may be fitly compared to some of those scourges who were raised up by Jehovah from among the gentiles to inflict just chastisement on his people; and were afterwards themselves destroyed for their pride and cruelty; and may be classed with those whom St. Paul mentions as "preaching Christ, even of envy and "strife;" the success of whose labours indeed he rejoiced at; but whom we cannot suppose to have shared in that benefit which many of their humble hearers may have derived from their preaching.

If we would avoid not only the risk of detriment to the Church, but the certainty

of condemnation to ourselves;—"lest, after "having preached to others, we should "ourselves be castaways,"—we must not too hastily reckon ourselves safe in the rectitude of our cause; but must make it a matter of anxious care, in our defence of that cause, to "let that mind be in us "which was also in Christ Jesus;" and to conform not only our faith to the doctrines of his religion, but also our temper, to its spirit.

We shall thus be the better prepared for guarding against party-spirit;—and our minds will be, as it were, a less fit soil for its growth. But the spirit itself must also be carefully watched, and every tendency towards it vigorously checked.

1. The most remarkable characteristic of party-spirit—the disposition to prefer the means to the end,—the party itself, and whatever tends to maintain it,—to the object it originally proposed, has been formerly described, and its ill effects pointed out. We must guard against it by keeping steadily in view what are the ends proposed, and what, merely the institutions that pre-

serve the society, and the marks that distinguish and hold it together: not that we are to neglect these; but to value and pursue them *as* means, and in proportion as they conduce to the original object. To relinquish that very object for the sake of them, or to regard it with comparative indifference,—or to uphold the party, when that object no longer appears desirable, is not only a glaring inconsistency, but is also productive of various evil consequences.

How ready many have been to abandon the points originally regarded as the fundamental principles of their sect or church, —or how indifferent in maintaining them, —though they remain as firmly attached as ever to the same party, is well known. Few Presbyterians probably of the present day would attach much importance to most of the scruples respecting our Liturgy, and church-government, which originally operated so strongly in producing the schism. But a breach once made is not easily closed; and the lapse of time, though it may have worn away the original causes of the separation, renders a reunion more

difficult than ever. The scion which has long been severed from the parent stock, cannot easily be reingrafted.

Among the members however of the Romish communion, an instance may be found which is much more remarkable, from the circumstance that, that Church claiming infallible authority, whoever admits her doctrines or practice to be in any point erroneous, has virtually denied that claim, and thereby convicted her (in his own judgment) of a false and impious assumption of the power of the most High: yet notwithstanding this, it is well known that there are many Papists who (though not unbelievers in the Christian revelation) do not scruple, privately, to avow their rejection of several of the most fundamentally erroneous tenets of their Church, and their disapprobation of many of its ordinances; who are even ready to ridicule many of the superstitions it has sanctioned, and would even be sorry to have it supposed that they really made a full confession to their priests;—yet would shudder at the very mention of openly renouncing that

Church; and would be even proud of their adherence to it, as to the only true and catholic church, and the only one possessing decisive and infallible authority.

It is indeed a common remark, that the *name* is in general the last thing men will consent to part with; and that a sect will often be brought insensibly to explain away or abandon most of their primary and fundamental tenets, while they would shrink from the proposal of breaking up the sect itself. Now in the case of those who see good reason for giving up those points of distinction, and renouncing those objects, which originally formed their party, it is clear that the prohibition of causeless divisions enjoins the dissolution of the party itself; and that it is only a vicious party-spirit that can still hold it together as a distinct body. But may not a similar spirit operate on the members of a society whose object ought *not* to be abandoned, and whose fundamental principles are *not* erroneous? They also may surely be guilty of preferring the means to the end;—the party itself, and whatever tends to support

it,—to the original purpose of it; and as the former class are right in abandoning their original principles, but blameable in still maintaining their party,—so, these last are right in adhering to the body they belong to, but highly culpable in forgetting or neglecting its main object. But such is human nature, that without continual watchfulness, this tendency to prefer the means to the end will continually shew itself; and men will be less zealous for those objects which are pursued because desirable, than for one which appears to them desirable, only because they have been accustomed to pursue it. And since this infirmity is inherent in human nature, we must not rashly flatter ourselves that the orthodoxy of our cause will preserve us from it. If in our contests with Papists, or with sectarians, we ever find cause to censure their obstinate adherence to a party whose errors they are convinced of, let us be careful that we on our part fail not to shew as much sincere and practical attachment to our faith as to the outposts and bulwarks that defend it;—that we appear not, warmly

interested for the reformation, while we are indifferent to the religion itself that is reformed, or more zealous for the mitre than the cross,—for the Church, than for the Gospel. Our Lord stands eminently distinguished from the teachers of false religions, by his never allowing respect for himself, and zeal for the propagation of his religion, to stand as a substitute for the essential points of conformity to his commands, and personal holiness: "Why," says He, "call ye me Lord, Lord, and do "not the things which I say?" and He declares that even those who have wrought miracles in his name, will, if found workers of iniquity, be rejected by him.

Since then the just boast of *our* Church is its conformity to the institutions of the Apostles, and its tendency to promote the religion they taught, it should be regarded as a kind of treason against that Church to profess zeal for its form, while we are careless of its spirit; and to maintain its institutions, while we are forgetful of the ends it proposes.

2. With respect to another branch of party-spirit formerly mentioned, the tendency to create needless divisions, and to fall into parties on insufficient grounds, it is difficult to give rules sufficiently precise to be practically useful; since, after all, it must be left to each man's private discretion to determine what *are* insufficient grounds. Let it however be carefully kept in mind, that all controversy, and all separation of Christians into opposed parties, are in themselves evils. It may be necessary to incur them, for the sake of a greater good; but then the burden of proof must always lie on ourselves, to shew that necessity. No general rule indeed can enable us to estimate the importance of any point that comes before us; but it is a very useful general rule, that important points alone can authorize contests and divisions; and that they must not be wantonly and hastily excited. And not only a separation from the Church, but the encouragement, countenance, and support afforded, either to any such open schism, or to the formation

of hostile parties within the Church, (as well as any conduct which provokes others to act thus,) must be justified by very sound and powerful pleas of conscience, (not of taste or convenience,) or will expose us to the condemnation of those whom the Apostle commands to be "marked and avoided" for "causing divisions." All separation, in short, of both kinds, and all excitement of it, must be either a duty, or a sin.

This rule is not only an important one to be observed, but, obvious as it appears, is so little even thought of by many, that it is not uncommon, to hear persons vindicate or excuse the sects of the Methodists, by alleging, that they do not in fact differ materially in doctrine or discipline from the Church of England; as if such disagreement were the sole measure of the fault: whereas in fact there may be sometimes perhaps even less blame incurred by those whose opinions are chargeable indeed with error, but are such as manifestly preclude them from conscientiously joining in our communion, than by those who violate the peace and unity of the Church, when they might

have preserved both, without offence to their conscience. To extenuate the charge of heresy, is often to aggravate that of schism.

The well-known contests in the Church respecting the time for the observance of Easter, and the use of leavened or of unleavened bread for the celebration of the Lord's supper, are deplorable instances of the tendency of mankind towards that kind of party-spirit we are speaking of. And let it be remembered, that these and similar cases are not to be contemplated with mere wonder and censure, but regarded as warnings to ourselves. We may often be guilty of cherishing the very same *spirit* with those to whose *principles* we are the most decidedly opposed. The misconduct and folly to which we are tempted never appears such to ourselves at the time; but we may be enabled to see it in its true light by contemplating the operation of similar principles in others; especially in those who lived so long ago, that time has worn off the gloss which concealed from themselves the deformity of their faults. But if we fail to

recollect that human nature is still essentially the same as it has ever been, we shall miss the important benefit to be derived from contemplating the errors of another.

Societies indeed may innocently be formed and supported by Christians without any such cogent necessity, and that for purposes connected with religion, provided no *opposition* be implied : but let the members of them be ever on their guard, (keeping in view those universal propensities of human nature which have been just mentioned,) lest the evils of party-spirit should arise out of institutions originally harmless; instructed by the example of the Methodists ; a society which had no schism in view at its first institution. A double care therefore is in such cases necessary, to keep in check that carnal mind which leads to " envying, and strife, and divisions."

3. Lastly, the self-confident and uncharitable bigotry which was mentioned as characterizing party-spirit must be repressed by the most earnest endeavours, and most fervent prayers, for the Christian vir-

tues of humility and of charity: nor must we ever forget that our being on the right side will be no security against the want of these virtues. We must not suppose that the stern bigotry with which the Romanists are charged is to be wholly imputed to their Church's claim to infallibility; it is not so much the effect as the cause of that claim: that Church did but sanction, and organize, and as it were regularly cultivate, those errors which spontaneously spring up and flourish, as in their natural soil, in the corrupt and carnal mind of the natural man.

Let it be remembered also, that openness to conviction, and readiness to make allowance for those in error, are not incompatible with the most sincere belief in the truth, and the warmest zeal for its propagation. In fact, a disdain of hearing arguments on both sides, and a bold condemnation of those who differ from us, are no credit to our cause; since they are at least as likely to be arrayed on the side of a false religion; whereas it is the character of truth to bear discussion; it is the spirit of the Gospel to

be long-suffering, and loth to form harsh judgments.

But besides those more unchristian feelings which lead to the fault in question, it frequently happens also, that a rash and arrogant confidence arises principally from mere ignorance, thoughtlessness, and inexperience. Those who have been long accustomed to attentive observation and deep reflection, will have often detected errors in systems which at first sight appeared unexceptionable; and will have been many times startled by unexpected objections: hence they in time acquire an habitual cautiousness in forming and maintaining their opinions; a cautiousness indeed, which, in feeble or ill-regulated minds, is apt to end in excessive scepticism. A defect accordingly of this cautiousness prevails in those who are inexperienced and unpractised in diligent investigation; and leads them to an excess of undoubting confidence.

There is a kind of indolence also, (the Greek historian expresses it most precisely

by the word ἀταλαιπώρια), which often leads to the same result. To "prove all things, and "hold fast only that which is right," is too troublesome a task to many; who are accordingly contented to adopt a whole system of doctrines and sentiments, in the mass; to maintain it dogmatically, and refuse to hear any thing that can be urged on the other side. To believe as a certain Church believes,—to hold *all* the tenets of a certain party, or theological school,—is a compendious creed, which does not much tax a man's intellects or his industry.

This presumption then, and this indolence in the search after truth, must be guarded against, by those who would preserve Christian candour.

It is not however meant to be insinuated, that of all, even the humblest, believers, it is to be expected that they shall be prepared to discuss, profoundly and learnedly, every article of their faith, and to answer satisfactorily every objection: those who want either the capacity or the opportunity, for so qualifying themselves, (who must ever constitute a great majority of believers,) should

abstain (as indeed every man should abstain) from discussing questions of which they are not competent judges; and should follow, in them, with humble and honest simplicity of heart, the direction of the best guide they can find; using however the best of their own judgment, as far as their qualifications extend, and fervently praying for spiritual aid: but of those who profess to be supporters, defenders, or teachers of their faith, candid inquiry, and openness to conviction may fairly be expected. Not that they should be always wavering in faith, and sceptical; but always "ready to "give, to every one that asketh them, a reason of the faith that is in them;" which implies that they should be ready candidly to *hear* reason also. They should cultivate then an humble, and sincere, and earnest desire of truth; not maintaining what they have not honestly ascertained, nor too much forgetting the investigator, in the advocate. Above all, let nothing unfair and uncandid,—no sophistry nor misrepresentation, be enlisted in the holy cause of truth, to which it will, in the end,

do more dishonour and detriment than service: let us not hire the Syrians to fight the Lord's battles[a]. And finally, remembering that Charity not only "is not puffed up," but also "thinketh no evil," we must be careful to do no injustice, nor shew any unnecessary harshness, to our opponents.

The consideration however which we ought to have for those who differ from us, and the principles on which we should regulate our judgment concerning them, and our treatment of them, will form the subject of the next and succeeding lectures; in the former of which I propose to speak of the cautions requisite to avoid dealing hardly with those who may not be deserving of blame; and in the latter, of the charity, tempered with discretion, which we are bound to shew towards the culpable.

[a] 2 Chron. xvi. 2, 3.

LECTURE IV.

ALLOWABLE DIFFERENCE AMONG CHRISTIANS.

ROM. xiv. 13.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way.

IN the passage before us, and likewise in several others, (especially in the first Epistle to the Corinthians,) St. Paul labours most earnestly to guard his converts from condemning too hastily or too severely those who differ from them, in any point, which does not call for such harshness and judgment;—from founding hostile parties on such grounds of difference;—and from offending and shocking the consciences of their brethren by conduct which may be in itself harmless. With this view he strongly represents to them the comparative insig-

nificance of many of their causes of dissension ;—their agreement in the essential and fundamental points ;—the diversity, and even inequality, both of the natural, and of the spiritual gifts, bestowed on different individuals ;—and the forbearance and consideration to which all the members of Christ's body are entitled from each other.

It is proposed then in the present lecture (in pursuance of the design formerly laid down) to offer some remarks on the cautions we should observe in our judgment and treatment of those who really or apparently differ from us, without being at all, or in any high degree, blameable ; that we may avoid the mischiefs arising from unmerited or excessive censure ;—from an overscrupulous requisition of complete uniformity in all points ;—or from any other want of consideration for the allowable differences among Christians. This deficiency of forbearance and of discretion is of course often found in those who have not taken due pains to keep themselves free from error, in doctrine and practice ; and is in them a heavy aggravation of those errors :

but it must be remembered, that the same fault may be committed by such as are themselves correct; and it will be necessary to proceed on the hypothesis, that this is the case with those to whom these cautions are addressed, because each man must, of course, in his own opinion, possess this advantage; and since his own sentiments cannot but appear to him the most correct, no one could apply to himself cautions which proceeded on the supposition of his being in error.

Supposing then our own system of doctrines and maxims to be correct, what are the dangers of our condemning others unfairly?

I. The first and most obvious, and perhaps most common, of these is, the danger of mistaking their meaning;—attributing to them such notions and sentiments as they do not really entertain;—and thus perhaps regarding with bitter hostility those who may not in reality differ from us at all. How common a source of dissension this is, seems to be indicated by the use of the word *misunderstanding*, as applied to dis-

agreements in general; as if the ordinary cause of these was, the parties not rightly apprehending each other's meaning. These mistakes then may arise, either from men's misinterpreting the expressions employed by others; or reasoning from them in a different manner, so as to regard them as leading to conclusions which the others do not admit; or from their associating in their own minds the sentiments professed, with others with which they have no necessary connection, but which are supposed always to go along with them, and to be entertained by the same persons.

To this last kind of mistake those are especially liable who have accustomed themselves to maintain an entire system or set of opinions and maxims, in the mass, without any separate examination of the merits of each; and who have associated principally with such as proceed on the same indiscriminate plan, of adopting or rejecting collectively all the tenets of each party. Such persons naturally calculate upon finding a similar disposition in all others; and if they meet with any one who

maintains a single doctrine (in itself perhaps unimportant) which belongs to the system of some suspected party or sect, they at once regard him as holding the entire system, and belonging to the party; and though there may be no natural or necessary connection between the opinion in question and the rest,—nay though he may expressly disavow them,—still they will often have so indissolubly associated the two ideas in their own minds, that it will seem to them no less incredible, that any one should hold the one opinion, and not the rest, than if they followed demonstrably from each other.

It may be said indeed, and with some degree of truth, that since parties and systems do exist, this mode of judging is allowable; since there is at least a strong presumption, that he who maintains one of the characteristic tenets of a sect, belongs to that sect; and, listening to the same instructors as the rest, has adopted, as men usually do, the same principles with them, throughout. Few accordingly would doubt that a person who held the doctrine, for

instance, of works of supererogation, held also that of the corporal-presence; though there is no natural connection between the two; only they are both among the distinguishing tenets of the Romish Church. But it must be remembered that *presumptions*, though they may afford more or less strong grounds of *suspicion*, are not to be construed into decisive *proofs;* they may be sufficient perhaps to put a man, as it were, upon his *trial;* yet not enough to *convict* him of error. If every coincidence in any point with the sentiments of a party whom we think erroneous, is at once to authorize the conclusion, that the coincidence extends to all other points likewise, it is evident that we are proceeding on the supposition, not merely that some men adopt opinions in the mass, but that *none discriminate;*—not only that parties exist, but that *every man* is to be reckoned among the devoted members of one or another.

Such probably were among the uncharitable and rash judgments which St. Paul so strongly condemns. Nothing can be more natural than that those among the

early converts who observed certain days, and abstained from certain meats, should be censured as Judaizers and heretics;—their opponents rashly inferring, that they agreed altogether with those who adhered to the ceremonial law, and who, trusting for salvation to the works of the Mosaic institution, had, virtually, cast off their faith in Christ. That this however was in some cases an unfounded and unjust inference, we have the express authority of the Apostle himself. It were to be wished that we had to search far in ecclesiastical history for instances of similar injustice: but it is to be feared that such take place every day. One perhaps of the most remarkable is to be found in the readiness with which some Arminian divines impute a complete adoption of all the tenets of the Calvinistic school, even to those who expressly renounce them, if in their explanation of any one doctrine they appear in any degree to take the same view of the subject with Calvin, or with any of his followers. It may be that their views are erroneous: so, as St. Paul implies, were the scrupu-

lous observances of the weak brethren among the Romans and Corinthians: still, a person's holding one error does not authorize us to impute others to him: it may be that there is a Calvinistic party, who maintain, as such, a complete system of doctrines, and adhere to them with indiscriminate bigotry: still we have no right to conclude, that no one who in any respect coincides with them, can be exempt from the full spirit of that party: it may be even that the doctrines in question appear to us to follow logically from the one maintained; still we have no right to charge with those consequences one who disavows them; since it surely is but common charity to regard him as inconsistent, rather than wholly erroneous;—as a bad reasoner, rather than a heretic: for as it is notoriously common for men to be so inconsistent as not to admit the *true* conclusions which follow from the principles they hold, it is no great stretch of credulity to suppose that they may sometimes be equally inconsistent with respect to false conclusions also.

As for the Calvinistic questions them-

selves, it would be foreign to our present purpose to enter into any discussion of them: but it must be acknowledged, that that want of charity which has been just described is too often to be found on both sides; and that some Calvinistic divines have been but too ready to attribute to such as do not coincide with their peculiar views, the rejection or neglect of the great doctrine of the atonement, and other essential parts of the Gospel scheme, even when there has been no ground for such a charge, except that such are the notions of the Socinians, who are also *among* their opponents, and to whose system it is thence presumed, *all* their opponents must incline.

We may indeed point out to any one the danger of the doctrines he maintains, in case *others* should deduce from them such conclusions as appear to us to follow: but even this must be done with great caution. It is indeed, in itself, an allowable mode of arguing against any doctrine, to shew that it necessarily leads, or even may be understood to lead, to absurd and mischievous consequences: and where this can fairly

be done, our procedure cannot justly be complained of by our *opponent himself;* but it should be remembered that it is not to *him* alone we are responsible for any evil we may by this means occasion, either to him or to others. We must therefore, in every case, weigh carefully the practical good and ill effects likely to result, on each side, before we resolve on adopting this mode of confutation. For it will often happen, that men may thus be led actually to adopt and support false doctrines, which originally they never thought of, when it can be made clear to them that these are inevitable consequences of their principles: they may be so bigoted to these, that rather than renounce the premises, they will admit the conclusion; and thus will have been driven into heresy by imprudent opposition. Nor is it always enough to say, that this is their own fault; our culpability is not the less, if we have been the occasion of the fault. St. Paul says, "Through thy "knowledge shall the weak brother perish, "for whom Christ died?" Here it is implied that he must himself be in fault; else

he could not be doomed to *perish;* but does this exculpate the others? By no means: "When," says he, "ye sin so "against the brethren, and wound their "weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."

Let not then the heresies, into which any persons have subsequently fallen, be deemed of itself a sufficient proof that their meaning was not in the first instance mistaken, and that the charges brought against them were not originally unjust[a]. And let those who would guard against needless controversy, and all the other evils of party-spirit, use every precaution against mistaking, in any way, another's meaning; and thus running the risk both of judging harshly one who may not deserve it, and of creating the very heresy they impute. Let the most candid and favourable construction possible be put on every profession, till we are compelled to understand it otherwise; where the case will allow of it, let blame be laid rather on the form of

[a] There seems good reason for suspecting that this took place in the case of the Arian heresy at its first origin; and still more, in that of Nestorius.

expression, than on the doctrine intended to be conveyed; and lastly, where it is manifest that incorrect notions *are* entertained, let it always be considered whether they may not be attributed rather to weakness of intellect, and inaptitude for accurate statements, than to culpable perversion of the truth.

II. For besides the danger of doing injustice to others by imputing to them doctrines which they do not hold, another fault which is to be guarded against, is that of not making due allowance for our weak brethren. Notions, not so much erroneous, as imperfect and inadequate, and those too, imperfectly and inadequately expressed, must be expected from those of feeble understanding, or of uncultivated mind; who may nevertheless, for their honest endeavours after improvement in religious knowledge,—their sincere faith, and diligent obedience,—be accepted by Him in whose sight the wisest and ablest are but mere weakness and ignorance. It behoves us therefore to use the utmost care

that we confound not intellectual deficiencies with heretical perversity of will; and that we neither harshly condemn, nor perplex and mislead those of humbler abilities.

Will it be said, that the Christian faith being one, all who are to be saved by it must hold the same? and that the Gospel being a revelation to all mankind, and especially to the poor and weak, all must be required to take the same view of it? If by this is meant, that every thing is placed within the reach of each man's capacity that is requisite for his *own* salvation, this is undoubtedly true, and does not at all invalidate what has been just said: but if it be meant, that all Christians are on a level in point of intellectual advantages, or that the most acute and most learned can understand no more of the Gospel scheme, than the dullest and most illiterate, such a notion is contradicted by Scripture, no less than by common sense and experience. The parable of the talents proves that, in some respects at least, all Christians are not placed on a level; and that though all are bound to improve their gifts to the utmost,

more will be required of those to whom more is given. And St. Paul's exhortation to "receive him that is *weak in the faith*, "but not to doubtful disputations," and his repeated and earnest recommendations of forbearance towards weak brethren, as well as his mention of babes in Christ, who must be "fed with milk and not with strong meat," sufficiently prove, if proof be needed, that feebleness of understanding, or backwardness in knowledge, may be expected to make the faith of some more imperfect than that of others; and that a tender consideration for such infirmities is to be expected from the abler and more advanced Christian. Those indeed whose defect is ignorance, should be exhorted to learn; and if they fall short of that right understanding and full comprehension of the Gospel scheme, which they might have acquired, they may justly be admonished of their fault in contenting themselves with imperfect, superficial, and inaccurate views, when a more complete and correct faith was within their reach: but still it is neither just nor expedient to confound even

this blameable backwardness in religious wisdom,—this slender proficiency, and, as it were, childhood in faith,—with decided rejection of the true faith; it is not only more charitable, but every way more prudent, to treat them as imperfect believers, rather than as obstinate heretics. There is danger, if they are abruptly and severely thus charged, that they may be led, even by what we say, to suppose that to be a distinct mode of faith, which in fact is rather a want of faith; and may be partly alarmed, partly provoked, and partly flattered, into embodying, maintaining, and propagating, as a peculiar system, what is merely the result of their own slight and inaccurate acquaintance with Scripture. These therefore should rather be commended for whatever they have already attained of a right faith, and encouraged to proceed further: we should point out and dwell upon our agreement with them, as far as they have gone in laying a right foundation; and endeavour to build on that the complete superstructure. St. Paul's discourse to the Athenians affords

an admirable example of this temperate and judicious procedure.

But with respect to those whose capacity is weak, or who have an inaptitude for expressing themselves with precision and regularity, great care must be used that we neither censure them unfairly, nor unnecessarily alarm and dishearten them, nor perplex them with statements above their comprehension. For in the first place there are some whose faith is by no means itself very deficient, but who (either from nature or education) are utterly incapable of giving any thing approaching to a clear and systematic account of the doctrines they really hold: and besides this, there are also many whose notions are in themselves very confused, indistinct, and inadequate, compared with those of the more intelligent and better instructed; and yet these notions, if they are the best they have the power to acquire,—if held in humble and sincere piety,—and if bringing forth the fruits of personal holiness,—may constitute a very sufficient and saving faith to themselves. Such persons may, by rash censures of the

incorrectness of their belief, and imprudent requisitions of assent to precise metaphysical statements, suited to a different class of intellects, be brought to believe themselves heretics; and may thus be either cast into a fatal despondency, or perhaps tempted to enlist under the banner of some heterodox teacher, who holds out to them a more flattering prospect.

And let it not be doubted that under such circumstances, very indistinct notions, and a very inadequate statement of them, (though highly culpable in those of better abilities and opportunities,) may be sufficient for these babes in Christ, till, by the patient and *gradual* instruction which we are bound to afford, their minds become more enlarged, their mode of thinking in some degree regulated, and their capacity for religious knowledge, together with the knowledge itself, progressively increased. How imperfect is the knowledge of a peasant respecting the process of germination in the seed which he sows,—the growth of the plant,—and its fructification! and how confused and imperfect an account would he

in general give, even of the little he does understand! Yet his practical knowledge is sufficient to enable him to prepare the soil for the reception of the seed, to raise the corn to maturity, and to gather in the harvest. How little did the ancient mariners understand of the magnitude, and distance, and motions, of the heavenly bodies! Yet by these they were enabled to steer their course in safety. So also may the word of God be a lantern to our steps and a light unto our paths, even though we may have but a very imperfect understanding of the divine dispensations. And as the knowledge of the humblest peasant respecting the operations of nature in the vegetable kingdom, bears a greater proportion to that of the ablest philosophers, than theirs does, to a full and perfect understanding of these mysterious processes; so also does the religious knowledge of the wisest and most learned, fall much more short, (not only of a perfect understanding of God's dealings, but) even of what he may himself hope to understand in a better world, when he "shall know even as also he

" is known," than the faith of the humblest believer does of his. And as the strongest intellect may be bewildered by prying too deeply into the counsels of the most High, and seeking to explain what is, to man, in his present state, inexplicable; so, persons of inferior powers and attainments may be led, not to knowledge, but to error, by hastily proposing to them such statements and explanations as surpass their capacity; though they may be intelligible and instructive to the abler and more advanced. No vain clamours therefore about deceiving the people,—no groundless charges of keeping the vulgar in ignorance, and preaching a different gospel to different persons, should deter us from following, at once the dictates of sound sense, and the example of St. Paul; or induce us so to perplex and confuse " those who are weak " in the faith," as really to incur the blame of deceiving them, for the sake of avoiding the appearance of it. For it should be remembered that, practically speaking, all truth is relative: that which may be to one man a true statement of any doctrine,

may be in effect false, to another, if it be such as cannot but lead him to form false notions; and that which gives him, if not a perfectly correct notion of things as they are, yet the nearest to this that he is capable of, may be regarded as, to him, true. Such is the account given in the book of Joshua, of the sun's being made to stand still: had a more correct statement of the fact, according to the Copernican system, been given, it would have been (to those whom it was addressed to) unintelligible.

Thus also, angels may perhaps perceive both deficiencies and misapprehensions in the faith of the wisest of men: and there are, we are told, mysteries, which even "the angels desire to look into."

While we endeavour then cautiously and gradually to promote the advancement both of ourselves and others, we must beware of hastily taxing with wilful blindness those whose views are limited only by the lowness of their position: as they rise in abilities and attainments, the horizon will gradually widen around them, and a larger and larger prospect will be spread before

their eyes of the boundless extent of divine wisdom and perfection.

III. But besides those mental differences among Christians which have been now mentioned, there are others also, which imply no *inequality*, but which require to be no less carefully attended to, by those who would judge fairly of all their brethren. Mutual censure, jealousy, or contempt, bringing in their train all the evils of party, will often be engendered in the first instance by contrarieties of *natural temperament;* or varieties of acquired tastes and feelings; where neither side is deserving of blame, except in not making due allowance for the other.

Among the early Christians, and particularly in the Corinthian Church, much dissension and uncharitableness seems to have arisen from a kind of rivalry among those who possessed different supernatural endowments: and accordingly, St. Paul, in his earnest exhortations to concord, finds it necessary to dwell very strongly on arguments which to us at the present day are

apt perhaps to appear too obvious to need being insisted on. He remarks, that though there are diversities of gifts, they all proceed from "one and the self-same Spirit, "dividing to every one severally as he will;" that this diversity is expedient for the welfare of the whole body, in the same manner as the diversity of offices of the different members is to the natural body;—that they have one supreme head, even Christ, "one faith, one baptism, one hope of their "calling;"—and finally, that charity is of more value than all their miraculous gifts together. In these days there are indeed no supernatural gifts; but there is hardly perhaps less diversity: in natural or habitual tempers and qualifications, men are as different (and as likely to disagree in consequence of that difference) as the Corinthians. Men differ in mind as much as in form and features; their intellects vary in kind, probably more than in degrees of excellence; and their tastes and feelings, perhaps more still. Some are calm and sedate; others have strong and lively feelings; and of these last, some are more in-

clined to be vehement and impetuous; others, more tender and gentle; some again are cheerful and sanguine; others, grave, serious, and decisive,—others, timorous and melancholy: and in respect of intellectual character also, some are chiefly remarkable as accurate thinkers and clear reasoners, while others possess a more lively and brilliant imagination: with innumerable other such varieties.

Nothing perhaps has ever been written on this subject more satisfactory than Cicero's judicious and elegant treatise in the first book of the Offices: in which he describes in a masterly manner several varieties of natural character; remarking, that none of these being intrinsically faulty, each man ought to conform to his own nature, provided he keeps within due bounds, —that the same conduct may be suitable and proper for one individual, which might be unbecoming, and consequently wrong, for another, under similar circumstances,— and that no one therefore should be found fault with for not coinciding precisely in all points with another, however excellent that

other may be. These observations are as applicable now as ever: for let it not be supposed that they concern the heathen world only, or are to be applied in the *secular* affairs alone, of Christians; and that all Christians, as such, are required to be precisely similar. Our religion was designed to renew indeed and ameliorate, but not to subvert our nature;—to amend mankind in general,—but not to contradict the essential principles of the human character;—to exalt and purify each individual,—but not to destroy his individuality. Whatever is faulty indeed, must be corrected by our religion, or it will not have done its proper work; but many differences of taste and temper will still remain, which will give a certain tinge even to the religion itself of each man,—which are nowise hurtful, but may even be rendered serviceable to the general cause,—and which ought no more to be made a source of mutual jealousy and of dissension, than the diversity of spiritual gifts among the early Christians.

A remarkable proof of this, if any be needed, is to be found in the differences of

style in the writers of the New Testament. If any thing can be supposed likely to assimilate in the greatest degree, men originally different, it would surely be their being not only devoted to the same great cause, the propagation of the Gospel, but also all of them supernaturally qualified for that work, by the inspiration of the same Spirit: yet it may be questioned whether even any profane writers, who agree in general principles, exhibit in their manner of writing a greater diversity of natural character than these do, in their general cast of sentiments and manner of thinking; and this, to such a degree as to be still very perceptible even through the disguise of a translation. What man of judgment, well versed in the rest of the New Testament, if we suppose him by some accident to have remained ignorant of some one of St. Paul's epistles, would be likely, when that epistle should be put before him, to mistake it for one of St. John's? yet the same Spirit was at hand to lead into all truth both these writers; it was one Gospel which was preached by both; as well as by St. Peter and the other apostles;

who yet differ in their *manner* of inculcating the same fundamental doctrines, from both those above mentioned, and from each other. Nay, the peculiarities of manner in St. Peter and St. John especially, coincide remarkably with the differences of their respective tempers and dispositions, as depicted in the Gospels, and in the book of Acts. We recognize in the writings of the one Apostle the vehemence and forward zeal which characterized him, though the weakness which had formerly blemished his character was removed: while the epistles of the other breathe that peculiar spirit of tender and fervent love, together with a remarkable simplicity of character, which are precisely what we should expect from the beloved disciple. And in St. Paul's writings again, we find that singular warmth of feeling, and unconquerable energy, which characterized the conscientious persecutor, though these had received a new direction from divine inspiration, and were modified in the Apostle by the mild spirit of the Gospel.

And if we would seek for yet further

proofs of the same point, we may find them in the varieties of style which characterize the different Prophets.

In fact, what has been now observed is no more than one illustration out of many, of the truth of the maxim, that miracles were not wrought unnecessarily. It was requisite for the propagation of the Gospel in its purity, and for the edification of the infant Church, that the holy Spirit should "lead the Apostles into all truth," and should pour out other supernatural gifts on other Christians; so far therefore did his influence extend[a]: but it was *not* requisite that all individuality and distinction of character among Christians should be done away, where these peculiarities had no evil in them; or that similar spiritual gifts should be bestowed on all: here therefore the diversity was both permitted and augmented. This divine work may be compared to that which took place "in the

[a] These considerations may serve to expose the fallacy of which those are guilty, who, from the appearance of such diversities as have been here mentioned, argue against the inspiration of the sacred writers.

"beginning:" "God saw every thing that "He had made, and behold it was very "*good*;" but all things were not made *alike;* the *variety* in the creation is infinite.

But as the Christian's life is designed to be a state of discipline, those on whom extraordinary gifts were bestowed, were of course left at liberty either to make a right use of them, or to abuse them in various ways; and among others, by making them a source of pride, of jealousy, and of party-spirit. The same is the case with all the natural gifts which men now enjoy, and with all the diversities of character which exist among them. Much as we may wonder at the envy, and strife, and mutual prejudice, which existed at Corinth or at Rome, similar injustice is practised every day, in no less a degree. For how common is it for those of an ardent disposition and lively feelings (which temper will of course shew itself in their religion, if they are duly impressed with it) to censure, as cold formalists, destitute of a spiritual mind, and of all true zeal and devotion,

those who have not the same fervent and rapturous emotions as their own; and among these, many, who, though they have a calmer and cooler temperament, and less exalted sentiments, yet possess a piety no less sincere, deep-rooted, and practical; and "love the Lord their God with all "their heart," though that heart be not susceptible of such vivid and intense feeling as another's. These last, on the contrary, are but too apt, while they value themselves on being rational and sober-minded, to brand the other class, as visionary enthusiasts, and fanatics. Again, some have a peculiarly strong perception of the beauties and sublimities of sentiment and expression in the sacred writings; and do not merely assent to their infallible truth, but *feel* their divine character: in their own language too these persons are in general richly figurative,—powerful in their exhortations,—and deeply affecting the heart of those whose disposition is like their own: these are often derided as empty, fanciful, and unsound, by calm and close, and severe reasoners, who have

but little liveliness of imagination, or sensibility of taste: and who themselves, in turn, are often contemned by the former, as no more than dry scholastic theologians, who have nothing of the spirit of the Gospel.

Some again shew in religious concerns an active, forward, and sanguine temper; others are more steady, quiet, and cautious in their proceedings: and each are but too prone to depreciate the others, the one, as officious and unsafe characters, the other, as lukewarm and destitute of zeal.

Similar observations might be made with respect to a multitude of such cases, in which, either from nature or education, the temper and turn of mind of one man will materially differ from another's; though when duly modified and regulated, neither will be in any degree blameable; but will rather conduce to the benefit of the whole body: nor have any of those whose gifts are different, either in degree or in kind, just cause either to complain or to boast of their own lot;—to envy or to disdain their neighbour's; since all have their re-

spective advantages and trials. Yet are these diversities continually occasioning mutual contempt and jealousy, hostile prejudice, and division.

But if (as may be seen in the chapter from which my text is taken) so much tender consideration is due even to the *infirmities* and *mistakes* of our brethren, how much more must it be unchristian to deal hardly with them, where there is in fact *no* infirmity nor fault of any kind, but merely a difference of taste, temper, or mode of thinking! And since such differences must always exist, what a fruitful source of dissension and party-animosity must that kind of uncharitableness be, which makes no allowance for such differences!

All these peculiarities indeed are liable to run into excess; but this is the case also with the *common and universal* tendencies of human nature; which nevertheless, when duly moderated, are not mischievous, but beneficial.

It should therefore be our care, if we would deal candidly with all, and repress

every tendency to party-spirit, to guard against these excesses in ourselves, instead of merely censuring them in others of an opposite character. The extreme of a disposition totally unlike our own, we can detect without any extraordinary acuteness or watchfulness; but *that* is not what most concerns ourselves; to watch our *own* peculiar propensities,—to guard against our own besetting sins,—is both the hardest task, and, to ourselves, incomparably the most important. It is however one besetting sin of men, of almost all dispositions, not to make sufficient allowance for each other; and to be too ready to conclude, when satisfied that they themselves are right, that all who, in any respect, differ from them, must be wrong. Had due caution against this want of charity, and narrow-minded self-estimation, been employed, on both sides, at the times when each schism in the Church was arising, most of them probably would have withered in the bud; had it been employed on *either* side, many of them perhaps would have been speedily suppressed; and at any rate, the

party which practised such moderation, would have kept itself free in the sight of God from the sin of uncharitable bigotry.

If we deal with others as we should wish them to deal with us, we shall be using the most likely means indeed to produce a similar conduct in them; but whether we succeed or fail in our endeavours after unity and *mutual* charity, we shall be approved in his sight whose precepts we are fulfilling; who has promised, that if we "judge not, we shall not be judged;" and who bestows on the peace-makers, the blessing of being called his children.

LECTURE V.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT TOWARDS OPPONENTS.

2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

After pointing out the advantages of that principle of our nature which combines and holds together those whose sentiments and proposed objects are the same, and also its perversions and abuses, it naturally followed, to offer some remarks as to the manner in which this principle should be regulated, and those abuses prevented.

With this view, some cautions were proposed, first as to the discipline and regulation of our own temper, generally, and without any particular reference to the persons who might stand opposed to us:

the principles which ought to guide us in our judgment and treatment of others, being reserved for a distinct consideration. And it seemed natural to distribute into two classes all who might, really or apparently, be at variance with us; and to consider first the requisite cautions for guarding against a harsh judgment or injudicious treatment of persons, either not at all, or in no high degree culpable;—whose difference from ourselves might be either not real, or not blameable, or unimportant; (which was the object of the last discourse;) treating afterwards (as is proposed at present) of the conduct to be observed towards those whom we cannot but conclude to be essentially erroneous.

In treating of this subject, it will not be necessary for the purpose now in hand to bestow a separate consideration on the two evils of Heresy and Schism; which, though in themselves distinct, are usually found together,—have a natural tendency mutually to generate each other,—and are each of them, for the most part, the more readily cured after the removal of the other. Both

are faults; and the remarks which I am about to offer will apply alike to both.

To determine however what errors are to be regarded as essential, and to adduce arguments in confutation of them, would be foreign to the plan originally laid down; which was to point out and guard against the faults of the orthodox, rather than of the heterodox, and to suggest proper cautions against that most frequent self-delusion, which persuades men, that since their own creed is correct, and the opposite party are in the wrong, they themselves must be irreproachable. St. Paul plainly shews, by his earnest and repeated admonitions both in the epistle now before us, and in many others, that, though far removed from that latitudinarian liberality of sentiment which regards all modes of faith with indifference, and though as zealous for the purity as for the propagation of the Gospel, yet he was fully sensible what disgrace and detriment to the good cause was likely to result, from the injudicious conduct, or unchristian violence, of its supporters. He

warns both Timothy and his other converts, that heresies and schisms must be expected to arise in the Christian Church; —that these were among the trials by which it has pleased God that man should be exercised and disciplined here below;— and that we are to guard against the danger, not only of adopting false doctrines, but also of falling short of the requisite discretion and charity, in defending the truth: he expands, in short, and enforces the admonition of our Lord, that his followers being "sent forth as sheep among wolves," (which in a greater or less degree must ever be the case, as long as his true disciples have any concern with those who are not such,) it is requisite for them to be "wise "as serpents and harmless as doves." While therefore they are firm in adhering to the truth, they must be careful not to impede its progress by maintaining it indiscreetly;—and while they guard against the danger of sacrificing any part of their faith for the sake of conciliation, they must nevertheless "be gentle unto all men, apt "to teach, and patient."

It is indeed most necessary for every one who would do good service to the cause of true religion, that he should not only be acquainted with the doctrines of the Gospel, but also with the nature of man ;—that he should be watchful, not only to keep his own faith pure, but also to win over others, by the most patient, and well-timed, and conciliatory instruction ;—and should be fully aware, not only of the faults he is to guard against in himself, but also of those which he must expect to meet with in his opponents. Whoever understands human nature, will be prepared to find in many men, not only erroneous opinions, but other faults also, independent of those errors ; and must shape his own conduct accordingly. Such are those excesses which have been described in the foregoing discourses ; and which are not essentially connected either with a right or a wrong faith, but will occasionally be met with in all men.

We must calculate on finding in our opponents, Party-spirit, in all its various degrees and modes of deformity ; and without

withholding our reprobation from the principle itself, or neglecting to counteract it, we must make all charitable allowance for an infirmity so natural, and from which many of those whose faith is right are so far from being exempt. Bitter Resentment of opposition must also be looked for; especially from those who have been opposed with bitterness; however just the condemnation of their tenets. We must expect too to encounter that Pride which will not endure the appearance of concession: and, in the adroit and practised disputant, that love of Controversy, which keeps up a debate for the sake of displaying argumentative skill, and aims more at victory than at truth. All these faults, which we are now considering how to encounter in our opponents, have been already noticed, with a view to the cautions requisite for avoiding them in ourselves; and it cannot be too strongly impressed on our minds, that since they all tend to engender the like faults on the opposite side, those who are themselves the most guilty of them, and the most ready to tolerate or encourage them in their own

party, will usually meet with the most of them in their adversaries;—and that consequently, to cultivate candor, gentleness, modesty, and aversion to controversy, in ourselves, and our party, is the most likely way to lead "those that oppose themselves," to do the same. It may be desirable however to lay down some additional cautions with a view to each of these points, separately, for regulating in the best manner our treatment of those in error: it being often useful to distribute the remarks that are to be made, under different heads, even where these are (as in the present instance) so closely connected, as not to admit of any very nice distinction between the observations brought forward under each.

I. First then, with regard to the spirit of party which may exist, or may be likely to arise, in our opponents; we must bear in mind, that it is in general much easier to *break and disperse* a hostile body than to *overwhelm* it. A common pressure may rather tend to consolidate the mass, which might have been shattered by well-directed

blows. Men may even be driven to make common cause with those from whom they materially differ in many points, for the sake of repelling a *common* attack. And, as was formerly remarked, persons not destitute of good sense have often been led, in the eagerness of a contest, to embrace such erroneous notions of their party, as they would have rejected, if singly proposed to their unbiassed judgment, but which they adopt without examination, when regarded as parts of a system which they have pledged themselves to uphold.

If therefore we are always forward to class together, and oppose *collectively*, all who appear to us to coincide in the objects they propose and the errors they maintain, we shall in fact be fostering that spirit of party which is but too apt to spring up spontaneously, and which is so powerful an aid to the cause of falsehood. On the other hand, the more we avoid (where it can be avoided) distinctly recognizing the existence of a party, and enrolling among its members all who in our judgment may be regarded as properly belonging to it,

the less firmly and heartily united, and the less numerous, shall we find that party. When, in short, we have to contend both against heretical doctrine and party-spirit, each affording strength to the other, the wisest way will be to combat these two evils *separately;*—first to endeavour by all fair means to dissolve or weaken the union of those who are banded together against the truth; and thus to assail error on more fair terms, unsupported by extrinsic aids. And not only should that fault be guarded against, which was mentioned in the last discourse, of falsely attributing to any one an *entire* adoption of all the tenets of a party, from his *partial* coincidence with it, but we should not even be over-ready to point out such coincidences in error as really exist; but rather draw the attention of our opponents to the discrepancies existing among themselves; and mark out the variety of the devious paths into which those have strayed, who have once wandered from the truth. It is neither wise nor just to allow those who differ considerably from each other in their erroneous

tenets, to derive mutual support and encouragement in those errors from supposing their mutual coincidence in doctrine to be greater than it is: and even in those points wherein they do coincide, as we cannot be bound in duty to dwell upon that coincidence, (since it is but fair that each opinion should stand on its own merits, and be tried, independently, by the tests of reason and Scripture) so neither will it be expedient, in many cases, thus to class together the advocates of an error. For it is not, in general, a likely mode of inducing any one to renounce an opinion, to tell him that it is held by many besides himself; or that it is supported by ancient authority; even of such as were in their time accounted heretical. If indeed an appeal be made to that authority, it will then be requisite to shew that it is not such as ought to be relied on: or again, if our opponent be of a candid and modest temper, he may be led to reconsider, and ultimately to renounce his tenets, if it be proved to him that they have been before broached, and were then condemned by

the main body of Christians. All I am contending for is, that this procedure should not be adopted universally and indiscriminately: those who are to a certain degree infected with the passion for novelty, yet have not sufficient boldness to be satisfied with standing perfectly alone, will often be more encouraged by the authority of a considerable sect, than overawed by the censure of the majority. And moreover, if we explain to any one that he is in fact an Arian, a Sabellian, or a Socinian, besides that it will be, in some, cases doubtful whether he is not more likely to be confirmed than shaken in his opinions, there is danger also that he may hereafter be led to advance a step farther, and adopt the entire system of those who furnish him with this confirmation. As a general rule then, let each false doctrine, and each individual promulgator of it, (when a proper occasion offers,) be opposed *separately;* but let not the orthodox lend their aid to the combining of errors into a system, and of heretics, into a sect. It will generally (where practicable) be found the wisest (as

it is for the most part the fairest) plan, to attribute, as far as possible, each erroneous notion that is maintained, to the *individual*, who may chance, on each occasion, to be its advocate, rather than to his party; that *he* may not be led, by us at least, to derive support to his opinions from the authority of others; and that *they* may not feel themselves called upon to regard him as their champion, and to rally in support of a common cause. As long as we make no sacrifice of the truth, nor suffer any heterodoxy to prevail unrefuted, we need not fear that any one will escape censure who deserves it.

It is prudent however, as well as charitable, to urge even this censure no further than is unavoidable, and to endeavour (where we honestly can) to mitigate the spirit of party in our opponents, by extenuating rather than aggravating the differences between us; which in fact may often be (even when real and essential) yet not so great, as they might be represented. We should not lengthen the distance they have to retrace in order to regain the right

path. And not only should the caution be observed which was formerly mentioned, of not too hastily charging any one with such consequences of his doctrines as he distinctly disclaims, but it will often be both the wisest and the fairest procedure, not even to wait for that disclaimer, but to take for granted, where the contrary is not distinctly avowed, that he cannot intend to admit such and such absurd conclusions, which would seem to follow from his principles; erroneous as he may be, in maintaining those principles. In a dispute, for instance, with one whose doctrines seem decidedly antinomian, it would be wise to ask him, plainly, but in such a manner as to vindicate our full expectation of an answer in the negative, whether he can really believe that a life of abandoned profligacy is becoming a Christian, or can be persevered in without danger to his eternal welfare; adding, that though his expressions seem to lead to no less, yet it is probable they are so understood by himself as not to imply that inference; and that if he holds it to be false and dangerons, he

ought to be cautious not to employ such language as may lead others to it. Again, to the defender of transubstantiation, we might say, "Your account of this Sacra-" ment appears to me fundamentally erro-" neous; but I cannot conceive any right-" minded person to hold, that the observ-" ance of this ordinance is in any way be-" neficial to hardened sinners, who have " no purpose of amending their lives, and " whose thoughts are not even at the mo-" ment engaged in what they are doing,— " that it is desirable for such men, so dis-" posed, to partake of the Lord's supper,— " or that they can receive the body and " blood of Christ to their souls' health: if " indeed you will distinctly avow such con-" clusions, you must stand chargeable with " the consequences; but if not, you ought " to be very careful to protest against them, " and to qualify the statement of a doc-" trine which may appear to lead to them."

By this procedure, men may often be led, heartily to abjure the mischievous conclusions which are not forced upon them; and may in time perhaps relinquish the

principles also which have this pernicious tendency; or at least will be induced so to modify and explain them as to render their errors comparatively harmless, even though they continue to adhere to them. And it is surely better that they should be inconsistently right, than consistently wrong; and that their hostility to truth should be mitigated, where it cannot be extinguished.

II. With regard to the bitterness and fierce resentment, which are sometimes to be encountered, and always to be apprehended, we must remember that nothing so much tends to excite and aggravate them as the like temper in ourselves; and that consequently it is no less politic than Christian-like,—no less suitable to the wisdom of the serpent, than the harmlessness of the dove,—to imitate the example of our great master, "who, when he was reviled, reviled not "again;" and to obey St. Paul's precept, of being "gentle and patient with all men." Not that we should bestow no censure on wilful blindness to the truth, or intentional sophistry and misrepresentation: but, as

we are bound by the law of that charity "which thinketh no evil" to avoid imputing these faults, where a milder interpretation is admissible, so, where we are compelled to pass a severer censure, it is still requisite to preserve a dignified mildness even in rebuke; and, without undervaluing the importance of a right faith, to shew a tenderness for the *persons* even of those whose faults we condemn; remembering that "while we were yet sinners, Christ "died for us;" and that we hope to obtain mercy only on condition of being merciful. "If any man (says St. Paul [a],) obey not our "word by this epistle, note that man, and "have no company with him, that he may "be ashamed: yet count him not as an "enemy, but admonish him as a brother." Above all, let no *personal* resentment be admitted; nor let the indignant feelings of wounded pride for personal affronts, and the desire of taking vengeance for them by triumphant sarcasm, be disguised in the specious garb of zeal for God's honour.

[a] 2 Thess. iii. 14.

Nor must the example of our Lord and the Apostles, in their decided, severe, and unqualified condemnation of some offenders, be more closely imitated than the similarity of the cases will warrant: those only whose judgment is infallible, and whose insight into the human heart is perfect, are authorized to pronounce without reserve or hesitation on the errors, and on the motives, of an opponent.

And whenever unchristian wrath, malignant satire, and bitter reviling, have been employed against those at variance with us, he is the most judicious advocate of true religion, as well as the best exemplifier of its spirit, who is the first to condemn such conduct in his own party; since he will thus both remove the prejudice which is likely to arise against doctrines which have been enforced with intemperate violence, and, by pacifying as far as possible those whom that violence has provoked into resentful obstinacy, may lead them to examine their own tenets calmly,—to weigh the arguments on both sides,—and to renounce the errors with

which they are no longer harshly reproached.

To this end, we should not only avoid and condemn all bitterness of invective, but also take every fit opportunity to express friendly feelings, and use mild and conciliatory language, towards our adversaries; giving them credit, where we can with justice, for sincere zeal in the cause of what they regard as the truth, though it be a "zeal not according to knowledge;" and manifesting, not scorn and hatred, and insolent exultation, but regret for their errors, and anxiety (on their own account) for their correction.

Care must be taken however not to testify such compassion for the erroneous as savours too much of contempt; lest mortified pride should harden them against conviction, even more than their resentment of a harsher rebuke. For pride is one of the most powerful obstacles to a conversion from error, and one whose adverse influence we must be ever watchful to counteract.

Will it be said, that those who indulge

this feeling have only themselves to blame? and that if they do not with *humility* seek for truth, they do not *deserve* to attain it? What, alas! would be the fate of the best of us, if no more favour were shewn him than he justly deserved? Who will dare to say, that his own inquiries after truth have always been as diligent, as candid, and as humble, as they could possibly have been; and that he is ready to be tried before God's tribunal on his own merits? Those persons indeed who are too proud to receive the truth when enforced in an arrogant style, and are ashamed to renounce errors with which they have been contemptuously taunted,—such persons, I say, —have, *themselves*, perhaps no right to lay blame on us: but will not *He* justly condemn us who "endured such contradiction "of sinners against Himself,"—who so patiently laboured to convert the arrogant and self-sufficient from their errors,—and who sent his apostles to preach remission of sins, even to those who had crucified their master? May not *He* fairly expect that we should bear with the frowardness

of our brethren, for *his* sake, who deigned to set us an example of humility, long-suffering, and unwearied benevolence?

It is not indeed requisite, nor would it be justifiable, to sanction and encourage the faults of any one: we are not called upon to approve or to foster the pride of our opponents; but we are far from doing this, when we are merely using precautions not to offend and provoke it: on the contrary, such forbearance has an obvious tendency to allay it. The less the wound is chafed, the more likely it is to heal.

With this view, not only should a scornful deportment towards our opponents be avoided, but all opportunities should be taken of testifying our assent to whatever may be right in their tenets, and our respect for whatever is laudable in their characters; and full allowance should be made for the magnitude of the difficulties on which they may have stumbled, and the strength of the arguments which may have contributed to mislead them. In no case more clearly than in this, do expediency and justice coincide. For since, in matters

not admitting of demonstration, not only apparent, but real probabilities may exist, —not only specious, but valid arguments may be adduced,—on opposite sides,—and since even unanswerable objections may be brought against conclusions, which are nevertheless true, and which are to be established by the *preponderance* of evidence,—it is plainly both equitable and prudent, to admit the full force of an adversary's reasons; without which indeed it is impossible satisfactorily to answer them. To treat his arguments as frivolous and childish, and his conclusions as palpable absurdities, will be more likely to pique his pride in defending them, than to open his ears to conviction. Men are usually more ashamed to acknowledge and renounce an alleged absurdity, than to maintain it; especially when they think (as is usually the case) that something plausible may be urged in its defence. The bye-stander too will often be prejudiced against the cause of those who shall appear to have triumphed too insolently, and too hastily; and will be led, from perceiving that the absurdity has

been overstated, to overlook it altogether.

It should also be remembered, that since men are usually no less jealous of *names* than of things, and their pride revolts at formal concessions, and at distinct acknowledgments of error, it is wise as well as charitable to shew some indulgence towards this infirmity; by sometimes leading them obliquely, as it were, to the admission of the truth;—by allowing them to explain as they will (where they manifest a disposition to concede) their own expressions, even though these may not be in themselves the most correct;—and by not insisting, when the substance of the truth is secured, on their adopting, in every case, that form of stating it at which they have taken offence. If we would hope for such forbearance towards our own frailties as may not be inconsistent with justice, we must not deny the same to our erring brethren.

III. Lastly, we must be prepared to meet with in those opposed to us that fond-

ness for disputation, and that controversial ardour, which are so common among men of all opinions: and much judgment and vigilance will be requisite both in preventing or mitigating its excesses, and in guarding against the evil effects of it: in guarding, I mean, against the advantage which may be taken of incautious negligence, by a keen, practised, and unfair disputant, who is more eager for victory than for truth. We must in short not only strive to repress, both in ourselves and others, a disputatious spirit, but also (since, after all, we cannot hope that it will ever altogether cease to exist) we must be careful not to expose ourselves rashly to its assaults. If one who is ill-informed and unskilful, presume to step forth as a champion of his faith, against able and learned adversaries, on points where that ability and learning are likely to avail;—or if he who is well versed in one department of knowledge, will venture to engage in discussions of other matters, with which he is unacquainted,—if he will quit his own proper post, as it were, to repel attacks on another quarter,—it is

not the goodness of his cause that will secure him from an overthrow, which may do discredit to that cause itself. But besides this, the ablest advocate of truth must remember, that if he is himself candid, singlehearted, and anxious only for fair investigation, he must not calculate on always finding his opponents the same; nor must, in honest and unsuspecting frankness, lay himself open to the arts of sophistry and misrepresentation. He should in fact endeavour to be an adept in all the wiles and fallacies of controversy; not in order to practise, but to guard against, and, where needful, to detect and expose them.

One of the commonest arts of those engaged in the defence of error, is to represent their opponents as maintaining the opposite error. And this is the easier, because in fact it will often happen, that it shall be no misrepresentation; nothing being more common than for an eager disputant to overstate his own doctrine in his zeal against that which he is combating; and thus unconsciously to be hurried by his own impetuosity into the contrary ex-

treme[a]. This danger is of course to be carefully shunned; but even the appearance of it is also to be guarded against: not only lest our opponents should avail themselves of that appearance, to obtain an unfair advantage over us, but also lest others should be led by our incautious language, into errors from which we are ourselves exempt.

The charges brought by many Socinians against their opponents, of being Tritheists, and Antinomians,—and by Papists, against theirs, of denying all divine authority to the Church, are among the numberless instances of the readiness of controversialists to resort to this mode of attack: and however groundless in any instance such a charge may be, much blame will still attach to those who heedlessly lay themselves open to it, and are not constantly watchful "to "abstain from all appearance of evil." We cannot indeed exercise too sedulous a vigilance on this point, on account of the constant liability of all men, when warmly en-

[a] The Arian heresy appears to have in this manner originated in a rash and intemperate opposition to the Sabellian.

gaged in controversy, to lose sight for the moment of every thing except the matter in debate,—to think of nothing but of proving their present point,—and to resort to every means of accomplishing the purpose they have in hand; regardless of the future mischiefs that may arise, in a different quarter, from the errors to which they may have unconsciously been giving countenance. They seem to be violating the command given to the Israelites, in their sieges, not to cut down trees which afford food for man, to construct their warlike engines; but to keep sacred from the ravages of war, what would be useful in the future days of peace[a].

The imprudent controversialist will often suggest fresh doubts, on points not necessarily connected with that in dispute, which will perplex, and perhaps ultimately drive into heresies of some other kind, men whose notions on those points had been originally, though not perhaps very distinct, yet not materially erroneous; they will be startled perhaps at having a new view of some doc-

[a] Deut. xx. 19.

trine presented to them, by his incautious expressions;—something which is stated or implied, incidentally in the course of his argument, which is to them paradoxical and offensive, and against which they raise objections. Thus new adversaries assail him from different quarters;—advantage is taken of his inadvertencies, not only by his original opponents, but by all who, from weakness, are disposed to misunderstand, or, from unfair prejudice, to misrepresent him;—and thus heresies are indefinitely multiplied, like the prolific heads of the fabulous hydra, by the unskilful attempt to destroy the first.

Not only however must we provide against the arts of controversy, and the mischiefs which may arise in the course of it, but the disputatious spirit itself must also be, as far as possible, checked and counteracted; which may in no small degree be accomplished by judicious care.

1. The first point is to set a good example; that is, to make it plain that we have not ourselves any delight in controversy; but regard it as always an evil in itself, though sometimes a necessary evil.

On this principle such errors as are either of small importance, or not likely to spread, either from their palpable absurdity, or from their having nothing inviting about them which will engage the passions of men in their support, or from the insignificance of their promulgators, it is better to leave unnoticed, than to raise a controversy about them. Many obscure heresies are mentioned by ecclesiastical historians, (besides probably many others that have escaped their attention) which died away of themselves, from being passed by with silent contempt; and many others also might perhaps as readily have become extinct, had they not been fanned into a flame by ill-judged opposition. Public attention is drawn to that which is made matter of public debate. Mankind are so formed as to take an interest in every kind of *contest*, however indifferent they may originally have been, as to the subject of it; though the subject will subsequently derive importance in their eyes from the contest itself. They are naturally led too, to conclude that there must

be considerable weight in that which is very strenuously opposed ;—that it must be a formidable adversary, against whom formidable preparations are made. And those who are fond of controversy, seize the opportunity of displaying their skill, and enter the lists on one side or the other : too often led by the desire of giving better proof of their abilities, to embrace the more paradoxical. And when heresies, which, if disregarded, might have sunk into speedy oblivion, have been thus magnified into serious evils, the opposers of them appeal to the magnitude of those evils, to prove that their opposition was called for: like unskilful physicians, who, when, by violent remedies, they have aggravated a trifling disease into a dangerous one, urge the violence of the symptoms which they have themselves produced, in justification of their practice.

I am well aware indeed that those who delight in a contest will be ever ready to reproach such as are averse to taking up arms, with being in the interest of the enemy,—to regard as tainted with error every

one who, on any occasion, thinks it not advisable to combat it: but he who sincerely "labours for peace," must prepare himself to endure the censure of those who are ever eager to "make them ready to bat-"tle."

It is not meant to be insinuated, that we are to regard with uniform unconcern the encroachments of false doctrines: in fact, the very caution against noticing *insignificant* heresies and those *unlikely to spread*, implies, (according to the well known maxim, that an exception proves a rule) that against such as *are* important, and threaten to prevail, those should step forth, as champions of the true faith, who are qualified for the task. It is impossible indeed to mark out by any precise rules, what errors, in each conjuncture of circumstances, ought to be combated, and what, disregarded: that must be left to the discretion of each individual: only let it be remembered, that the exercise of that discretion is called for, not only to decide whether any doctrine is false and intrinsically dangerous, but also whether more evil is

likely to arise, in each instance, from attacking or from neglecting it.

2. It may be said indeed, and with truth, that not only is controversy on many occasions unavoidable, but also, that whoever is engaged in inculcating truth, is virtually, at the same time, opposing error;—that to abstain ordinarily from all mention of any point, except those which are never controverted, would be to abandon all the essential doctrines of our religion—and that consequently we cannot abstain from combating heresy, unless we abstain from preaching the Gospel. All this is undeniably just, as far as regards the *matter* of our discussions; but the *manner* of them, is a point of great importance also; and it is to that, that I am at present inviting your attention. For, by *controversy*, or *disputation*, is commonly understood, not every course of argument whose conclusion has ever been denied, but that which has the *manner* and *tone* of opposition;—which is brought forward with the air of an advocate, rather than of a teacher, —and seems designed rather to silence an adversary than to convince and enlighten an

unbiassed hearer. Now it is too commonly the case with those who have been much accustomed to polemical writing, that every thing they say savours of this spirit of opposition; they seem always to be arguing *against* some adversary; and even their instructions are delivered rather in a controversial than a didactic form. This fault it is the more important to guard against, because nothing is so likely to generate opposition as the appearance of thus expecting and challenging it. But besides this, it is desirable, even when opposition *has* been raised, still, as far as is practicable and safe, to adhere to the didactic style of reasoning, rather than the polemical; according to the precept of St. Paul, which directs the minister of the Lord "not to strive, but "in meekness to *instruct* those that oppose "themselves." The method of instruction (by conveying an implied and incidental rather than a direct opposition to the contrary doctrines, while at the same time it suppresses no part of the truth,) is calculated not only to avoid the unnecessary aggravation of hostile feelings, but also to

gain a more favourable hearing for the truth; whereas it gives something of a paradoxical air to any doctrine, to put forward very prominently the circumstance of its being a *disputable* point. In fact, the very argument itself which is urged, that in teaching the truth, we are of necessity, virtually, combating falsehood, will alone prove the sufficiency of the method now recommended: if we are but careful to keep back nothing of "the whole counsel "of God," we need not fear that error should flourish uncorrected.

To those who are sincerely desirous of complying with St. Paul's precept, and will habitually direct their attention to it, there will be no great difficulty in adhering, as far as the case will allow, to this instructive style, which appears rather "ready to "teach" than to contend.

A few cautions however I will briefly advert to in conclusion, not as pretending to any novelty, but as being highly important, and very frequently overlooked.

3. Let it be remembered then, that, instead of turning aside to reply to every ca-

vil, or to notice, in the first instance, even every fair objection, that may be brought forward, it is wiser to begin at least, in each instance, by distinctly explaining our own tenets, and giving such reasons for them as will refute the opposite conclusions in the very process of establishing our own: and when we *do* find it necessary at all to notice the contrary doctrines, then, to make it our first business to examine the *whole* system adopted by our opponents, and the consequences it leads to; and to shew how strong are the objections which lie against it; instead of combating it in detail, and merely seeking flaws in this or that particular argument: to act, in short, (for the most part) principally on the offensive; and since great difficulties (as has been already observed) may lie against each of the opposite conclusions, not to undertake to remove every one that may be urged against our own, but to consider which side labours under the greatest.

Such a procedure is so far from being (as some might, at first sight, suppose) at variance with the plan above recommended, of

avoiding controversy as much as possible, that it is in fact a natural result of it. It is surely no inconsistency, that they who are averse to war, should, when it is absolutely unavoidable, prefer acting on the offensive, and carrying on their attacks with vigour, that they may the sooner accomplish their object. But moreover, the method I have been recommending is in fact the least polemical in form, that could be adopted. To be exclusively occupied in repelling and adducing objections, tends to prolong indefinitely a contest, in which neither of the disputants will be ready to acknowledge his inferiority; and has besides an immediate reference only to the *opponent* and the *controversy, as such*, rather than to the establishment of the truth; since our refutation of an antagonist's reasoning does not, of itself, prove that his conclusions are not true: whereas if we direct our main attack against those conclusions themselves, at the same time shewing strong reasons in support of our own, the pride of the disputant will not be so much mortified, and he will be more likely to acquiesce in

the truth, when he is thus "in meekness instructed."

4. It should also be remembered, that as, in the case of legal punishments, some are designed to reclaim the offender, and some, merely to deter others by his example; so, in our opposition to heresies and schisms, the object is sometimes to convert and recall the erroneous, and sometimes to warn others against being seduced by them; and that a somewhat different mode of procedure should be adopted, according to the object proposed. To point out the absurdities and the mischiefs, to which any error naturally leads, is the more likely way to deter men from falling into it: but to trace up the mistake to its origin,—to explain the difficulties and clear up the misconceptions, which first gave rise to it, will generally be the more efficacious method of reclaiming those already infected. Which procedure is in each case to be adopted, must be decided according to the circumstances of that case: but that this decision may be made, not at random, but by deliberate judgment, it is useful to keep in

mind the distinction which has been mentioned.

After all however, we must still expect often to meet with such obstinate heresies and schisms, as no combination of zeal with wisdom and gentleness, can subdue; often shall we have the severer mortification of seeing them fostered and aggravated by the injudicious violence of those who are on our side; and sometimes, doubts may suggest themselves to an individual, whether the good effects of his own prudence and moderation, may not be entirely frustrated by the misconduct of others. But such regrets and such doubts can bring but a transient pang to the breast of him whose hopes are firmly anchored on the rock of divine providence: while he is doing that, which, if all men did it, would cause "truth "to flourish out of the earth, and righte-"ousness to look down from heaven," he will feel assured, that, for himself at least, his "labour is not in vain." He will rest satisfied that, whether his own efforts are successful or not, God's purposes will be fulfilled, when his unerring wisdom shall see

fit: and while thus fighting under the banner of Christ, yet with humble resignation trusting the event to providence, he will be enabled to say with pious confidence, not only "thy kingdom come," but also, "thy "will be done."

LECTURE VI.

FOOLISH AND UNLEARNED QUESTIONS AVOID.

2 Tim. ii. 23.

Foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strife.

In the text which was selected for the last lecture, St. Paul seems to have had in view the *manner* of a Christian Minister's discourses; and in the one now before us, (which immediately precedes it) the *matter* of them. On each of these points there are cautions required, in order to afford useful instruction, and to avoid strife: and as in teaching and maintaining the great doctrines of our faith, care must be taken to avoid indiscreet violence, so also with respect to the points themselves in discussion, there is no less exercise of discretion, in selecting such as are proper to be treated

of, and avoiding those which lead to unnecessary controversy.

Now since the object proposed in these discourses was to suggest such rules as might be useful in guarding against the evils of party-spirit, and in preserving the peace of the Church, as far as that is possible without sacrificing its doctrines ;—and since in every question that may arise, which is likely to lead to controversy, or to generate party, there are three points, to which our attention should be directed,—first our own temper, or that of our coadjutors,—secondly those really or seemingly at variance with us, whether culpable or not,—and lastly, the matters themselves which are the subjects of discussion, it seemed natural to distribute under these heads, the cautions to be suggested. And though the classes thus constituted are not in themselves so distinct as to preclude the possibility of their occasionally encroaching on one another, so that some of the observations referred to one head, must frequently, in some measure, anticipate what is to be said on another, it is nevertheless a conve-

nient aid to the memory to treat of them separately; in order that our judgment, in each individual case that occurs, which after all must depend on a multitude of nice considerations, may be aided by some sort of method, which shall enable us the more readily to take a comprehensive view of them all; and may thus at least be not more perplexed than is necessary.

Of these heads the two former have been treated of in the three foregoing discourses; in which such remarks were offered as seemed most important, on the regulation of our own temper, and on our judgment and treatment of those who differ from us. It remains to say something of the subject-matter of the discussions; taking into consideration at the same time (as is obviously necessary) the language, which is the instrument and vehicle of those discussions; and to suggest such rules of procedure as may conduce to the objects proposed.

It will be the business of the concluding discourses to apply what shall have been said, to the present state of the Church, both with respect to the sects which have

separated from it, and to the parties which exist, or which may be likely to spring up, within it.

I. First then with regard to the doctrines themselves on which we are occupied, all enquiries should be avoided which relate to matters, first, too deep and mysterious; or, secondly, too *minute* and trifling; or, thirdly, too *speculative*, and remote from Christian practice. Such were probably what the Apostle had in view when he cautioned Timothy to abstain from "foolish and "unlearned questions," ἀπαιδεύτους ζητήσεις, the pursuit of which indicates a want of proper training and mental discipline with a view to the full understanding of the true character of the Gospel, and of the subjects proper to be discussed by the Christian, as such[a]. For since it is evident that the epithets "foolish and unlearned," when applied to enquiries, must have reference to the enquirer himself, speculations even concerning the most interesting and sub-

[a] Πεπαιδευμένου γάρ ἐστιν ἐπὶ τοσοῦτον τἀκριβὲς ἐπιζητεῖν καθ' ἕκαστον γένος, ἐφ' ὅσον ἡ τοῦ πράγματος φύσις ἐπιδέχεται. Arist. Eth. Nicom. b. i. c. 3.

lime subjects may be foolish and unlearned to *us*, if they surpass the limits of our faculties, and are such as we cannot, without presumption, engage in.

1. That there *are* subjects connected with religion, which it is unprofitable or worse than unprofitable to discuss, no one would venture to deny; and it is no less undeniable, that among these are to be reckoned such as are neither laid open to us by revelation, nor are comprehensible by our reason: but men are, in general, far less ready practically to conform to this maxim, than to admit its truths. And more especially is presumptuous enquiry the besetting sin of those who are free from any propensity to gross vice, and are not sufficiently occupied or interested in the business of the world, to be in much danger of temptations from that quarter; but being habitually engaged in abstract studies, and chiefly influenced by the desire of knowledge, are especially liable to the faults arising from the excess and perversion of that desire. The agitation of questions respecting these "secret things which

"belong unto the Lord our God," has a peculiar tendency (as St. Paul warns us) to "gender strife;" since men are less likely to agree in the bold theories they form respecting points on which they can have no correct knowledge, and which are in fact unintelligible to them, than in their opinions on matters which are within the scope of fair reasoning, or which may be understood by the aid of revelation. And since every disagreement in opinion leads to controversy, and is likely to array the disputants in hostile parties against each other, it is particularly important, with a view to the object we originally proposed, that we should abstain from, and earnestly deprecate, enquiries on those subjects on which (besides that it shews an unbecoming presumption to enter upon them) disagreements are most likely to arise, and no satisfactory decision can ever be expected.

The heresies which arose in the earlier ages of the Church, respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, seem to have chiefly arisen from the prevailing taste for arrogant metaphysical disquisitions on that in-

scrutable mystery: and in the present day the rash attempts that have been made by some to explain, on the abstract principles of justice, the counsels of the Most High in the no less incomprehensible mystery of the atonement[a], have probably had no small share in giving growth to the prevailing heresies on that point. And when, as too often happens, the opposers of any wild and presumptuous theory, instead of condemning, as they ought, the very enquiry itself, and deprecating "foolish and "unlearned questions," fall, themselves, into a similar error, by pretending to substitute their own explanations of the point, for that which they object to, they aggravate and perpetuate the evils of daring speculation, and mischievous, as well as fruitless, contention. Where all are in fact in the wrong, the parties are not likely to

[a] Hervey is one of the most remarkable of the writers of this stamp; not on account of any superior ability displayed in his works, or from their being more strongly marked with the character in question, than those of many others; but from the extensive circulation which the piety of his sentiments, and the gaudiness of his style, has procured for them.

come to an agreement: like men who should rashly venture to explore a strange land in utter darkness, they will be scattered into a thousand devious paths.

The evil too is perpetually increasing, as long as this proud spirit, which will not admit any thing but what can be explained,—this presumptuous craving after forbidden knowledge, (the very sin by which our first parents fell) continues to be cherished. For the very offer of an explanation of any of the mysterious articles of our faith, encourages those who are dissatisfied with that explanation, to withhold their belief from the doctrines till they shall have been more clearly unfolded; and if every fresh scruple thus raised, be met by a fresh attempt at explanation, there is no setting bounds to the multiplication of errors and of contentions.

Since however every one, though he might condemn in others, as impious, the disposition to pry into inscrutable mysteries, would be unwilling to reckon among these the subject of his *own* discussions, the difficulty is to determine where the line

should be drawn. And as it would be manifestly impossible within the compass, even of several discourses, to enumerate the various points, on which presumptuous enquiries have been instituted, and to assign the limits of allowable discussion in each, it will be best to mention briefly the principal *causes* which lead men to mistake the true boundaries of the human faculties.

The pride which disdains to acquiesce in the belief of what is inexplicable, and the thirst for knowledge, so natural to man, but so liable to be carried to excess, have been already adverted to, as the original causes and first movers of presumptuous enquiry: but what I have now in view, is, the misconceptions to which these feelings contribute to give rise, and through the medium of which they operate: which are principally these two; first, that men are apt (however distrustful they may be of the powers of *unaided reason*) to expect a full and distinct knowledge of whatever is revealed in God's word; and secondly, that whatever is *familiar* to them, and is a common subject of their thoughts and dis-

course, they usually consider as comprehensible by their faculties, and clearly intelligible.

The former of these errors should be guarded against, by steadily keeping in view the *purposes* for which a Revelation was given; *viz.* not for the increase of our speculative knowledge, but for our instruction in what is needful to be known, in order to our serving God, and conforming our lives to his commands: whatever does not conduce to this end, however satisfactory the knowledge of it might be to our minds, is withheld from us; in great measure perhaps for the express purpose of making a trial of our faith. We must remember therefore, that though enabled by revelation to know what reason could not discover,—and though we ought to have the most undoubting confidence in the truth of God's word,—in the *certainty* of what is thus made known to us, yet we now "know but in part;" we see indeed many of the wonders of divine providence; but we "see through a glass, darkly." Nor is God revealed to us as He is in Himself, but as he is relatively to our-

selves ; and even the relations in which He stands to us are but imperfectly developed, though as far perhaps as our present faculties can comprehend them. We stand, in short, (as many passages of Scripture seem to indicate) in somewhat the same relation to our heavenly Father, as that of little children towards their parent ; who communicates to them indeed enough to entitle him to their love, confidence, and cheerful obedience ; but whose character and designs are very imperfectly and indistinctly understood by them.

Hence it is that Scripture frequently gives us, in different places, such accounts of the divine attributes and dispensations, as would, if understood literally, be utterly inconsistent and contradictory ; for the express purpose, as it should seem, of teaching us to limit and modify one statement by the aid of the other,—to correct the misapprehensions which might arise from either, if considered separately,—and to be aware how partial and imperfect an insight we are intended to have into the divine mysteries [a].

[a] See Archbishop King's discourse on Predestination.

There cannot be a more striking instance of this, than the Scripture accounts of the doctrines of predestination and free-will. It is but too well known what bitter and interminable controversy respecting these doctrines, has been introduced into the Church by those who have paid an exclusive attention to each of them respectively, and who have thought themselves warranted to seek for a full and clear understanding of the subject, on the ground that it is to be found in a divine revelation. Those will indeed have but faint and imperfect notions of it, who adhere to the rule of giving a fair portion of attention to all parts of Scripture, and never interpreting any passage so as to be irreconcileable with another; but they, and they alone understand the word of God as it was designed to be understood. If on any such mysterious subject as this, our notions are perfectly distinct and full, there is strong ground of suspicion at least, (for that very reason,) that they are incorrect.

With regard to the other mistake just noticed,—that of confounding *familiar ac-*

quaintance with accurate knowledge, and imagining ourselves capable of clearly understanding the nature of whatever we have been much accustomed to think and speak of, (a mistake which is very common in other subjects, as well as theology) it should be guarded against by deep and habitual reflection on the innumerable mysteries which daily surround us,—and on the scanty and indistinct conception we have, of many phenomena whose existence we cannot doubt, and which we have continually before our eyes. The union, for instance, of corporeal and intellectual attributes in every one of us, and the mutual action of the mind and body on each other, are so familiar to us from constant use, as to have long since ceased to strike us with any degree of wonder; and hence we are apt to forget how utterly inexplicable they are. It is the same in numberless other instances; and among these, in respect of many of the doctrines both of natural and revealed religion, which, men, who have been perhaps acquainted with them from their earliest infancy, and accustomed

to think and converse much upon them, are thus insensibly led to regard as far more comprehensible by the human mind than in fact they are. Hence they not only often venture to attempt explanations of matters beyond the reach of the human faculties, but even regard such explanations as a necessary part of Christian instruction, and are ready to censure as unbelievers, such as profess to receive the doctrines in question, with implicit faith and reverence, but object to the explanation proposed,—abstain from any such attempt,—and acquiesce in them with awe, as unfathomable mysteries.

It is indeed a remarkable fact, that a man is usually less offended with those who profess to understand what he does not, than with those who acknowledge their inability to comprehend, what he holds to be clearly intelligible; since these last will appear to entertain a suspicion at least, (of what is probably the truth) that he has been deluding himself with empty fallacies, and grasping a phantom.

Those however who are more charitably

disposed, are content to reckon one who thus confesses his ignorance, among the babes in Christ, who, though not heretical, are yet very backward and deficient in religious knowledge: whereas he is perhaps in fact further advanced than themselves; and if they will continue to study and meditate with patient and humble diligence, they will perceive more and more the vastness of the obscurity that is around them; and will attain at length to that most valuable and fundamental branch of wisdom, the knowledge of their own ignorance: they will find, like Simonides, that the longer they reflect on the nature of the Deity, the more difficult and mysterious it will appear.

Even the words which are most familiarly employed in our reasoning, and which seem to occasion no perplexity or embarrassment in it, will, many of them, be found, on attentive examination, to convey ideas, of which we have but a very indistinct comprehension, and which lead, by a very few steps, into an unfathomable abyss of darkness. Such are "Time," "Space," "Eternity," "Infinity," "Cause,"—and

in short most of the terms employed in the discussion of questions even of natural religion. Let any, for instance, consider, that since our only idea of time, is derived from the *succession* of impressions on our minds, it follows, that to a Being who is eternal and omniscient, there can be no such thing as past and future, "but" (as the poet[a] well expresses it) "an eternal Now does ever "last;" (which notion seems alluded to in our Lord's words, "Before Abraham "was, I *am*,") and he will perceive at once how easily we may be lost in inexplicable mystery, by attentively reflecting on the meaning of the most common and familiar terms; and how much more, though without perceiving it, we are likely to be bewildered, by rashly employing them in their reasoning, without such reflection.

Indeed there are probably few men of sound judgment, who have carefully attended to the improvement of their faculties, that do not remember the time when many things appeared to them perfectly simple and intelligible, which they now re-

[a] Cowley.

gard as difficult and obscure. And in no point perhaps is the advantage of a judicious and truly philosophical cultivation of mind more apparent, than in its guarding us against the common error of regarding the things spoken of as easily comprehensible, in proportion as the names of them are common and familiar. The Algebraist and the Logician, being accustomed to the use of arbitrary symbols, are well aware of the important fact, that we may reason justly, even where the terms employed are utterly unmeaning to us: and if they are careful to make due application of this principle, they will not forget, that, though it may often be a great convenience to have a *name*, for something of which we have but a very imperfect idea, we must not thence suppose that we have attained to the knowledge of it.

2. Besides the unfathomable mysteries which we have now been speaking of, it was mentioned in the opening of this discourse, that another class of subjects, from which we should abstain if we would avoid questions which gender strife, is, the mi-

nute and insignificant: such as, though they are not beyond the reach of the human faculties to decide upon, yet being either altogether unworthy of discussion, or not of sufficient consequence to justify the risk of raising dissension, should be avoided, on the principle formerly laid down, that controversy should always be regarded as an evil in itself, to be incurred only when necessary for the sake of some important good. For it should be remembered, that not only does every question that can be raised, lead to differences of opinion, disputes, and parties, but also, that the violence of the dispute, and the zeal and bigoted spirit of the party, are by no means proportioned to the importance of the matter at issue: the smallest spark, if thrown among very combustible substances, may raise a formidable conflagration; and when men are disposed for strife, the discussion of any question, however insignificant, may engage them in a contest, in which the zeal and animosity of the disputants will inflame each other, to a degree which appears to calm observers almost in-

credibly disproportionate to the magnitude of the point itself. Witness the long and acrimonious controversies which distracted the Church concerning the proper time for the observance of Easter; and concerning the use of leavened or unleavened bread at the Lord's supper. We of the present day, viewing these disputes from a distance with the eye of sober reason, and perceiving of how little consequence it is in itself, whether one day or another be set apart by the Church for the celebration of a religious festival, or whether the sacramental bread be leavened or not, provided these points be so fixed as to produce a decent uniformity, at least among the members of each Church, can hardly bring ourselves to believe, that the most important doctrines of the Gospel were not made the subject of more eager contentions, than such trifles as these; and that for these the peace and unity of the Church were violated, and Christian charity too often utterly destroyed. But we should not forget that human nature is still the same as it ever was; and that though the controversies of one age may often ap-

pear ridiculous in another, the disposition to contend about trifles may remain unchanged.

3. Not only however should we avoid the risk of causing needless strife by the discussion of such questions as are *in themselves* trifling, but those also are to be regarded as, to *us*, insignificant, which, however curious, sublime, and interesting, can lead to no practical result, and have no tendency to make us better Christians, but are merely matters of speculative curiosity[a]. St. Paul is frequent and earnest in his exhortations to his converts to confine themselves to such studies as tend to the edification of the Church,—the increase of the fruits of the Spirit,—the conversion of infidels,—and the propagation of the essential doctrines of the Gospel. And that these doctrines are of a *practical* tendency, —that the Christian revelation is not calculated to gratify our thirst after knowledge for its own sake, but to instruct us in

[a] The speculations of many divines respecting the doctrine of the Millennium may perhaps be referred to this class.

what is useful to be known with a view to our salvation, is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the true religion. All the systems framed by human superstition, enthusiasm, and imposture, whether Pagan, Popish, or Mahometan, abound, as might be expected, in mythological fables and marvellous legends, well fitted to interest and gratify the curiosity of the credulous, but not even pretending to be of any practical importance. Our religion, as might no less be expected of one which comes from God, reveals to us the Father, that we may worship, and thank Him, and trust in his kind providence;—the Son, that we may humbly rely on his atonement, and seek his mediation, and prepare to be judged by Him at the last day,—and the Holy Spirit, that we may implore His inward aid, and be led by his suggestions: and it every where teaches us, that though "the secret things belong unto the Lord "our God, the things which are revealed "belong unto us, that we may *do* all the "words of this law."

I would not be understood indeed to

preclude all thought or mention of any subject connected with religion, whose practical utility we are unable to point out: only let all *controversy*, and every thing that is likely, under existing circumstances, to lead to controversy, on such points, be carefully avoided: when once a flame is kindled, we cannot tell how far it may spread; and since, though we may be *allowed*, we cannot be *bound* in duty, to discuss speculative points of theology, the blame of occasioning needless dissension must lie with those who so discuss them, as to incur a risk that hostile parties may arise out of their speculations.

That questions of no practical importance may "gender strife," and divide Christians into sects filled with the most bitter animosity, paradoxical as it may be, is but too clearly evinced by experience: and the faultiness of those who by their pride and party-spirit are the immediate causes or promoters of such schism and strife, does not exculpate the others, whose imprudent speculations first called into action their evil passions.

II. The cautions to be observed with respect to the language of religious discussions have been in great measure anticipated by what has been already said, both in this, and the foregoing discourses: words being not merely the vehicle for conveying our thoughts to others, but also the *instrument* of thought itself, on abstract subjects; so that all rules for forming correct notions ourselves,—for rightly interpreting and judging of the faith of another,—and for conducting controversy, and imparting instruction, discreetly, must have an immediate reference to the proper use of language. It is however so common a fault to overlook the importance of words in influencing our thoughts, that it may be advisable to lay down distinctly and separately some maxims relative to this point, and to keep them steadily in view.

The rules most important to be observed with respect to the use of language, are, first, to be aware of the ambiguity of words, and watchful against being misled by it; since the same word not only may, but often must, be used to express different

meanings: secondly, (since on the other hand the same meaning may be expressed by different words) to guard against attaching too great importance to the use of any particular term: and lastly, to avoid, as much as possible, introducing or keeping up the use of any peculiar *set* of words and phrases, as the badge of a party.

1. The neglect of the first of these cautions has probably contributed more than any other cause to the excitement of groundless and unsatisfactory disputes, leading to all the evils of strife and division. If one of the principal terms be understood in different senses by the respective parties, who in reality perhaps differ very little (originally at least) in their sentiments, there is but small chance of their bringing the discussion to a close. For men are in general prone to mistake words for things, and to regard those as real, which are in fact only verbal controversies; and yet are usually so indignant at being cautioned against this mistake,—they regard it as so high an affront to be suspected of being unconsciously engaged in a logomachy,—that

he who proposes to terminate a contest by proving that it turns on the ambiguity of words, must prepare himself to incur, from the eager controversialists of both parties, even more ill-will than they feel towards their opponents.

Experience affords but too many instances to illustrate what has been said.

The questions respecting fatalism and free-will (mysterious as the subject undoubtedly is in itself) have been greatly perplexed, and the true character of the difficulty mistaken, through the ambiguity of such words as "possible" "may," "can," and others of that class, which relate sometimes to *power*, and sometimes to *contingency*: for instance, in one sense it is true, and in the other, false, that a man of strict integrity *may* defraud his neighbour; *i. e.* he has it in his *power*, if he will; (otherwise there would be no merit in his honesty) but we may be *certain* that he will not. On the other hand, when we say that a sick man *may* recover of his disease, we mean not that it depends on his will to do so, but merely that we are not certain of the

event. And thus the attribute of prescience, since it is manifestly incompatible with *doubt and uncertainty* in the Being who foresees, has been represented as incompatible with free-agency in him whose conduct is foreseen.

The word "Person" again, when its ambiguity has not been clearly explained, seems to have had a share in occasioning many apparent, and, ultimately, many real heresies. In its ordinary colloquial sense it always implies a *distinct substance:* in its theological sense, being a literal, or rather perhaps an etymological, translation of the Latin word Persona, which has not that meaning, and answering to the Greek Hypostasis, it is applied by the Church to express the distinction which she affirms to exist between those whose identity of substance she expressly maintains[a]. Many a doubt might be satisfied, and many a cavil silenced, by the simple expedient of clearly stating this ambiguity.

In the controversies also concerning Re-

[a] In the Nicene Creed, where the Son is declared to be "of one substance with the Father."

generation, though much real difference of sentiment has prevailed, much more also has probably appeared to exist, and much perplexity has been introduced into the discussion, from the different senses in which the word has been used; sometimes to signify the act of *first entering* upon a Christian life, sometimes, that life itself,—and that regenerate *state*, in its full maturity and vigor of action.

Many persons are the more liable to fall into the error now under consideration, from their too hastily making their appeal to the language of Scripture, without sufficiently considering in what different senses the same word is often used in different places by the sacred writers; who seem indeed not to have designed to draw up and adhere to a strict technical vocabulary, but to have aimed only at making their meaning clear in each separate passage that they wrote. The different uses of the word "Faith" by St. Paul and St. James, is a familiar instance of this; but is only one out of many that might be adduced. Indeed so far are the inspired writers from endeavouring (all of them collectively) after

a uniform mode of stating any doctrine, that even each one of them seems to have sought for a variety of terms and phrases for expressing his ideas more forcibly and clearly.

2. This ought surely to be an example to us to adhere to the other maxims above laid down; *viz.* that of not too rigidly exacting an adherence to any particular form of expression,—attaching undue importance to a name, where the substance of any doctrine shall appear, on a candid examination, to be correctly held; (the observance of which rule would probably have allayed the controversy which took place on the article in the Nicene Creed, relating to the procession of the Holy Ghost, in which there seems to have been no essential difference between the parties) and we should also learn, I say, to observe that other caution abovementioned, of avoiding the peculiar and characteristic *language* of a party; *viz.* the constant and unvaried use of certain fixed technical words and phrases, in the statement of each doctrine[a]. Many evils arise

[a] It is to this kind of fixed phraseology that the term "cant" is most commonly applied.

from this practice. In the first place the constant recurrence of the same terms, usually causes the hearer to become in time inattentive to the things signified; the sounds are so familiar to him, that at length they affect him little more than as mere sounds, which do not rouse the mind to earnest reflection; whereas every variation in language tends to dispel this inertness of the understanding, and to awaken attention.

In the next place, since our language when treating of heavenly things must be borrowed by analogy from things more level to our capacity, and since these analogies cannot but be very imperfect, the constant employment of the *same* [a] analogical expressions in each case respectively, will be apt to suggest to the hearer and fix in his mind some incorrect theory on the subject, by leading him to suppose the analogy more complete than in fact it is. The obvious preventive of this evil is to *vary* as much as possible the analogies made use of, that

[a] See some excellent observations on this subject in Professor D. Stewart's Philosophy of the human Mind.

each may serve to correct the erroneous notions that might be suggested by another. Of which practice we have most striking examples in the numerous and ever-varied parables by which our Lord illustrated each subject He was treating of; and in the multiplicity of different metaphors employed by the Apostles in explaining each article of the Faith.

Lastly, it is obvious that causeless divisions and all the evils of party-spirit must be greatly promoted by adopting and uniformly adhering to a fixed set of expressions calculated to become the badges of a party. For by this means, over and above all the real differences of opinion which exist, a fresh cause of opposition and separation is introduced among those who would perhaps be found, if their respective statements were candidly explained, to have in their tenets *no* real ground of disunion. I would not be understood as questioning the necessity of retaining such creeds and articles of faith as are requisite for limiting the vagueness of men's interpretation of Scripture, and maintaining in the members of the

Church an agreement as to essential points; —but, as suggesting a caution against falling into a pernicious extreme,—that of too constant an adherence, without necessity, to a single form of expression on each point, and too hasty a censure of all who vary from it. In fact, the very expediency of these fixed formularies of our Church establishes the point for which I am contending: for since that expediency consists in their helping to keep together, as a distinct body, the members of that Church, which in this case is a desirable effect, it follows, that where no such object is, or ought to be, proposed, the means which lead to it, should be avoided. There is nothing that tends more strongly than this practice to generate and to prolong causeless divisions among Christians: for, every *peculiarity* (as was formerly observed) which characterizes any class of men, however insignificant it may be in itself, is generally cherished by them with undue regard; and serves to heighten their zeal, and strengthen their union as a party. Nor will the consequences of such divisions

be by any means as trifling as their causes; for when parties are once firmly established, and arrayed against each other, their opposition will usually increase; and the differences between them, which were originally little more than imaginary, may in time become serious and important.

I shall have occasion however again to advert to this point in the subsequent discourses, and especially in speaking of the dissension and party-spirit existing within the bosom of our Church. In the next discourse, the case of the *dissenters* from our Church will be considered, and an application made, of the foregoing principles, to the open schisms existing in the present day.

It would indeed be vain for us to hope (since even the Apostles could not effect so much) entirely to remove these evils: but we shall be following the safest guides, and doing the utmost benefit to the Church that human weakness and depravity will allow, if we carefully and habitually study and endeavour to conform to *their* principles and their practice, who are at once the most unerring instructors, and the most perfect models.

LECTURE VII.

CONDUCT WITH RESPECT TO DISSENTERS.

COL. iv. 5.

Walk in wisdom towards them that are without.

THOUGH we cannot on every occasion discern fully the reasons of God's dealings with us, we may be well assured, that the situation, whatever it may be, in which we are placed, has its appropriate duties annexed to it; and that the greatest present difficulties and afflictions, since they afford scope for the exercise of some corresponding Christian virtues, may be made conducive to our eternal benefit. Like the insect which gathers honey even from poisonous weeds, the true Christian will derive spiritual advantage from temporal evils; and fully trusting that "all things "work together for good to them that love

"God," will (without presuming to pry into the counsels of the Most High) set himself earnestly to profit by all his dispensations, and to practise those duties which the existing circumstances especially call for.

To the early Christians it must have been one of their most grievous trials to live in the midst of unbelievers; among whom must have been included many who were not only their fellow-citizens, but also their relations and friends. And in addition to this, there were also many heresies, which had sprung up among themselves, and which must have been a heavy addition to their temptations and afflictions.

To both these circumstances the Apostles frequently advert; and point out to their converts the duties thence arising,—the Christian virtues which were to be thereby exercised. The prevalence of infidelity furnished a secondary motive, (and no one who understands human nature will depreciate the utility of secondary motives,) to a life of such purity and rectitude, as might do credit to their profession, and

recommend their faith: and the springing up of heresies furnished a trial of their vigilance, their patience, and their steady zeal in the cause of truth. "There must "be," says St. Paul, "heresies among you, "that they which are approved may be made "manifest;" and again with reference to idolatry of the Gentiles by whom his converts were surrounded, he cautions them to "walk in wisdom" towards these; he requires that the elders of the Church be such as "have a good report of them which "are without;" and he rebukes the sins of those who adhered to the Mosaic law, in that, "the name of God is blasphemed "through them among the Gentiles:" and St. Peter exhorts the Christian women so to conduct themselves, "that if any obey "not the word, they also may, without the "word, be won by the conversation of the "wives, while they behold your chaste "conversation coupled with fear:" and again; "having a good conscience, that "whereas they speak evil of you as of evil "doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in "Christ."

The conduct of Christians of the present day should be actuated, as far as the circumstances in which they are placed correspond, by similar motives. Many of our countrymen who are living in foreign regions, especially in the East, are in the midst of Pagans; and most solemnly they should be warned of the peculiarly awful responsibility they lie under, and of the strong additional motive they have for leading a Christian life; inasmuch as if, by their sinful lives or apparent indifference about religion, they encourage a contempt for the Gospel, or a prejudice against it, they will have to answer for the evil effects produced by their example; and will have a fearful account, not only of their own souls, but also of those of the heathen whose conversion they will thus have impeded. The same considerations will apply to the case of those that have friends, who are eitheir altogether indifferent about religion, or unbelievers: there can hardly be a more painful trial; but it is our fault if we do not make a spiritual advantage of it, by regarding it habitually as a motive for redoubling our vigilance and zeal.

And as far as regards the practical application of what has been said, we may properly reckon as of the number of "those "which are without," both Papists, and Dissenters from the Church. Not that we are to consider them as on a level with Pagans, and as excluded from the Gospel covenant; but the question is not now concerning the *magnitude* or the *nature* of *their* errors, but concerning the rules of conduct to be observed by *ourselves* with a view to the maintenance and propagation of the truth. If we but admit the existence of schism, (including under that name, not only the later departures from our communion, but also, adherence to the usurped authority of a corrupt foreign Church) and if we acknowledge that all schism is sinful, (a point which men are not indeed sufficiently ready, at least practically, to acknowledge, but which has been so clearly established by many able writers, that it is not necessary on this occasion to enter into the proof of it) it is manifestly a Christian duty, not only to abstain from joining or directly encouraging any sect,

but also, in every part of our conduct, to consult the welfare and unity of the Church, and regard ourselves as engaged in her cause.

There are indeed some who would be ready to censure such sentiments as these, in a layman at least, as savouring of narrow-minded bigotry, and uncharitable party-spirit; as if every one who contends that schism ought to be opposed as in itself sinful, must needs regard it as an *unpardonable* sin, which at once excludes those guilty of it from salvation: but it surely is not necessary, in order to keep clear of such intolerant harshness as this, that we should adopt such a notion of charity as removes, in fact, the principal occasion for the exercise of that virtue; for the chief province of charity and forbearance evidently consists in forgiving, and making allowance for those who are in *fault*,—in treating with candour and with personal kindness those whose principles we *disapprove*; but if there be no fault in schism, there is nothing to forgive;—if there is nothing wrong in those who disagree with

us, there can be no great exercise of charity and liberality in allowing that disagreement.

This indifference clad in the garb of candour, is, as I have said, the most frequently met with, and the most expected, in those who are not engaged in the ministry. Laymen are indeed but too apt to consider themselves as little more than bye-standers in the dispute between the Church and her opponents: they perhaps give her the preference indeed, but rather as a matter of taste than of conscience; or at least, rather, as umpires between two contending parties, than as making the cause their own; and many a one may be found who would allow, and even expect, in the Clergy, some zeal in that cause, yet would seem to regard it as altogether *their* concern; not as one in which he himself has a common interest.

These sentiments often arise not so much from weakness or perversity, as from thoughtlessness, and want of due attention to the subject; for every sincere and candid Christian, if he can be brought to reflect

attentively on the solemnity with which the Church was instituted, as a society not of Ministers merely, but of Christians at large, and on the earnestness with which its divine Founder and his Apostles inculcated the duty of preserving its unity and promoting its welfare, will hardly fail to be convinced, that if he would claim a share in the benefits of Christ's redemption, he cannot be indifferent to his institutions; and that therefore, as he is not only permitted but bound to withdraw from our Church, if he finds her doctrines or institutions essentially at variance with the word of God; so, if he finds her to be, in faith and practice, scriptural, he is no less bound, not only not to withdraw from her communion, but also to use his best endeavours in her cause.

The rules by which we should be guided in using these endeavours, in what relates to our dealings with those at variance with the established Church, may most conveniently be classed under three heads, of Correctness of life, Zeal, and Conciliation: first, that we should be careful to preserve such an irreproachable purity and rectitude of conduct

as may adorn and recommend the society to which we belong; next, that we should be active, according to our opportunities, in maintaining and propagating the truth; and lastly, that we should manifest such gentleness, such candour towards the opinions, and such tenderness towards the persons, of those opposed to us, as may both moderate the acrimony of party, and win over those who are in error.

I. With respect to the first of these points, it might be supposed, on a superficial view, that to each individual Christian the direct and primary motives to personal holiness, are so powerful as to need no addition; so that he would either be sufficiently influenced by these, or would be callous to all others: but if we either reason from those general principles of our nature which have been treated of in some former discourses, or attend to the lessons of experience, we shall not fail to arrive at the conclusion, that men are very powerfully influenced in their moral conduct by the secondary motive of anxiety for the credit of the body they belong to; of which indeed

they sometimes appear even more careful than of their own.

The Apostles seem to have been fully aware of this natural principle, and to have had a view to it in many of their exhortations; as appears from the passages which have been already cited, and others of a similar character. The dread of bringing disgrace on the whole body, and the desire to recommend and adorn it, seem to have been recognized by them as useful additional incentives to vigilance and active virtue. Nor were they enforcing a motive which reason will not sanction, and which is suited only to the weakness of our nature; but one which is perfectly sound and rational: men are not only more *likely*, but also more strongly *bound*, to conduct themselves well, when the credit of their religious profession is concerned: they are not only more easily deterred by a sense of shame from any such misconduct as may bring a scandal upon the whole body, but they in reality incur greater guilt if they fall into it; since our conduct is to be estimated not merely by its intrinsic character, but also

by its tendency to lead to an acceptance or rejection of the truth by others.

Now that the world are in general very much influenced in their judgment concerning any religious persuasion by the lives of its professors, is undeniable; and however rash and ill-founded such a judgment may often be, still we must remember that it *will* be formed: it is not universally true, but it will always be believed by many, that those whose lives are the most correct, are the most correct in faith also; and that unchristian conduct is a symptom of erroneous doctrine: and whatever blame may attach to those who suffer themselves to be misled by applying this criterion, the sin of him who occasions the scandal will not be thereby lessened.

I have said, that the conduct of the members of any religious persuasion does not afford a safe criterion for judging of the correctness of that persuasion: it is indeed abstractedly true, that the purest Christian faith leads to the most virtuous conduct; but this test cannot fairly be applied in practice, without many cautions and excep-

tions; since under different circumstances men's lives are influenced in very different degrees by their respective systems of faith. And to conclude from the immoral lives of some ministers or other members of our Church, that the doctrines of that Church are less scriptural than those of some sect whose partisans are more correct in manners, without distinguishing between that which is the natural and proper *tendency* of any system of faith, and that which results from the *abuse* or practical disregard of it, would be a perversion of our Lord's admonition, to "know the tree by its fruits." Such an application indeed of that maxim, in its metaphorical sense, would be no less rash, than it would be of its literal sense, were we to draw a similar general conclusion from the instance of the barren figtree which Jesus cursed, and to judge of the nature of the whole species from that individual.

Of the circumstances which ought to be taken into consideration in any such case, one of the principal is, the more active zeal of the smaller and weaker party, which

makes them usually both more bitter in spirit, and also more strict in general morals. Each individual, in proportion as he feels himself a more important portion of the body he belongs to, is likely to take a livelier interest in its welfare; and thence will usually be both more liable to the excesses of bigotry and animosity, and also more careful to bring no scandal on his party.

It is but just therefore that men should be warned to take this circumstance into consideration, when they institute any comparison between the moral conduct of Churchmen and of Dissenters; and to remember that the activity in Christian duties which they now perhaps admire in some sect, would be put to a severe trial, if their's were to become the prevailing and established religion.

The friends of the Church again should be exhorted to aim at securing the advantages which lie on both sides, while they keep clear of the concomitant evils;—to emulate the diligence, and strictness in morals, to be found in some Dissenters; yet retaining a liberal and candid spirit.

Another circumstance, which ought not to be overlooked by those who are comparing Churchmen with sectaries, in respect of Christian practice, is, that those who are indifferent to all religion are for the most part, from motives of convenience, nominally, members of the establishment: and that persons whose lives do no credit to their profession, are much more likely to be excluded from the communion of a sect than from that of our Church; which thus ranks among her seeming adherents some who do not even profess any regard for her doctrines or institutions.

I would not be understood as blaming this lenity in the exercise of the Church's discipline: the very circumstance that her authority is supported by that of the Law, calls for the greater tenderness in the employment of it; but it is surely fair that the fact should be admitted, and allowance made for it in forming our judgments.

The greater our difficulties however, the greater should be our diligence; the more liable we are to suffer from unjust prejudices, the more vigilant we should be to

avoid giving occasion for any well-grounded charge. And each member of the Church is *doubly* bound by his allegiance to Christ who is the Head of it, not only in direct obedience to his commands, but also for the benefit of the society which he instituted, both himself to adorn the doctrine of his Saviour in all things, and likewise to promote to the utmost of his power the same conduct in the fellow-members of his Church. Especially should he avoid even the appearance of *tolerating* in any of them a laxity of morals for the sake of their adherence to the Church,—of regarding orthodoxy of profession as a kind of compensation for an unchristian life: remembering how solemnly our Lord excludes from the number of his disciples all the workers of iniquity who "call Him Lord, Lord, and "do not the things which he says."

II. With respect to that Zeal for the refutation of error and the propagation of truth, which was mentioned as requisite to be added to purity of morals, it is to be remembered that this, if combined with discretion and temper, has no tendency to di-

minish the esteem or good will of our opponents: it is a mistake to think that we can obtain the favour of those who differ from us, by professing latitudinarian principles; on the contrary, those who have themselves any conscientious zeal, always think more favourably of such as, in that respect, resemble themselves, even though disagreeing with them in religious tenets, than of those who regard the matters in question as insignificant, when they are really among the essentials of religion. What Protestant, for instance, would not think more favourably of the spiritual condition of a sincere Papist, than of one who should regard with indifference the points at issue between the two Churches, as trifling and unimportant?

It is therefore not less impolitic than it is unwarrantable, to adopt that spurious liberality of sentiment which makes light of heresy and schism: neither prudence nor conscience will allow us to withhold censure from those who are either fundamentally erroneous in doctrine, or violators of Christian unity; though that censure must be free

from unchristian asperity. Not that every member of the Church is called upon to step forward as her champion against sectaries; but every one is bound to be cautious of affording, directly or indirectly, any encouragement to their fault; nor must he suppose that he is free from all participation in that fault, so long as he does not formally renounce the communion of the Church.

I allude more especially to a sort of occasional dissent, which is sometimes practised and defended by persons who profess no disapprobation of our Church, but object to some particular minister of it, as incompetent, or unsound in his preaching, in comparison with some dissenting teacher to whom they have access. The excuse is plausible; nor would I be understood to question the sincere good intentions of many who offer it; much less to do away the force of the admonition which is thus given to a minister, when his flock desert him; and especially when he finds that even the judicious and sober-minded part of them, who are not unfriendly to the

Church, nor foolishly eager for novelty, complain of his preaching, as unedifying or disgusting, and withdraw from their attendance on his ministry. But still those who urge this plea should be reminded, that if any doctrines decidedly heretical are broached, or gross improprieties committed, complaint may be made to the proper authorities. This indeed is an unpleasant office; and is often avoided by *all*, on the plea, that it does not belong to any *one* in particular[a]; but each Christian is bound,

[a] That cases of this kind do occur, in which men are kept back, by such feelings as I have alluded to, from seeking such redress as might actually be obtained, will hardly be denied. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that very just and serious ground of complaint may exist, where nothing can be so taken hold of as to be made the ground of ecclesiastical censure. Those who, in such a case, forsake their parish-church, to attend on the ministry, not of a dissenting teacher, but of some other clergyman belonging to the establishment, have been sometimes perhaps too severely censured for the practice. For though those are justly to be blamed who, "having itching ears," are seeking to gratify their taste for eloquence, and to exercise their critical skill,—or who are actuated by a wanton love of variety,—it would surely be going too far to say that no circum-

in such a case, to consider how he would act, if his own temporal interests were at stake;—whether he would not find then some means of procuring redress, if his rights were withheld from him,—and how he can answer to his conscience, for being more remiss in what concerns God's honour and service, than in what relates to the perishable goods of this world. If again (as will most frequently be the case) it be only a *deficiency* in the edifying inculcation of Gospel truths that is complained of, for this evil, lamentable as it certainly is, our Church has provided the best remedy that the case will admit, both in the public reading of the Scriptures themselves, and also in a Liturgy so framed as not only to be agreeable to the general tenor of the Gospel, but likewise to inculcate its leading doctrines. If our Church, like that of Rome, kept the Scriptures a sealed book to the unlearned, and assigned to the personal sincerity of the minister an influence

stances can justify those who in singleness of heart are anxiously seeking spiritual instruction, for resorting to the expedient in question.

in the efficacy of the Sacraments[a];—or if, like some of the reformed Churches, she admitted neither the public reading of the Scriptures, nor the use of an established liturgy, but trusted every thing to the extemporaneous effusions of the preacher, the excuse in question would have great weight: but as it is, men should consider whether the immediate advantage gained is not more than counterbalanced by the violation of an important general rule,—by the gradual depreciation thus produced of the duty of Christian unity,—by the countenance afforded to schism,—and the extenuation in the eyes of men in general, of the evils it produces. At any rate, they should at least not overlook the objections which lie on this side of the alternative. Let it be remembered however, that whatever degree of blame may, in each case

[a] The Church of Rome do indeed admit that the official acts of a *vicious* Priest may be valid; but the *inward intention* of the Priest is, according to them, requisite to the efficacy of every sacrament he administers; so that if he designedly withhold this intention, there is no true sacrament. The Council of Trent anathematizes those who deny this position.

that occurs, attach to those who forsake the Church, the Minister is not the less heavily responsible, whose unsound, or negligent, or indiscreet preaching, has aided to drive into dissent those entrusted to his care.

Although however we are bound to avoid giving any encouragement, direct or indirect, to heresy or schism, and to keep clear of even the appearance of regarding them with indifference, and though such as are well qualified should be ready, when fit occasions offer, to defend the cause of the Church,—to warn the unwary,—and to admonish the erroneous, yet the most advisable plan, generally speaking, will be, to oppose sectaries, not so much by directly preaching against them, as by diligence in affording religious instruction, as far as we have opportunity, not with respect to the controverted points merely, but in all the essential truths of the Gospel as maintained by our Church, especially those most dwelt upon by our opponents. Such a procedure is not only the least likely to produce irritation, but at the same time the most efficacious with a view to the ob-

ject proposed. It will refute the charges so often brought against Churchmen, of remissness and of indifference about the great truths of Christianity;—it will deprive of all excuse those who desert the Church professedly for the sake of hearing those doctrines preached;—it will remedy that ignorance which is the soil on which errors are the most likely to spring up;—and it will remove all appearance of that corrupt and unchristian party-spirit, which is more zealous for the Church than for the Gospel, and which rather values our religion for the sake of the establishment, than the establishment for the sake of the religion. Most sedulously indeed must we guard in every way against affording either any just ground, or any shew of truth, for the accusation of adhering to the Church because it is established by the State, and resting her spiritual authority on the law of the land. Against the members of any legally established Church, indeed, this accusation will always be brought by her opponents, whether it be well founded or not; but they must for that reason be the more

diligent by their life and doctrine to refute the charge.

If indeed the members of our Church, while they oppose Dissenters, fail to use their best exertions, in every way, for promoting the spiritual improvement of their fellow-subjects, they cannot complain, or wonder, at finding that their zeal in the cause is attributed to impure motives;—to self-interested views, or to political considerations, and regard for the Church chiefly as a part of the constitution. And most especially should we be active in remedying that evil which has been but too prevailing an occasion and excuse for schism, the want of sufficient places of worship, and of ministerial attendance, of the established Church. In places where this deficiency prevails in any great degree, to caution men against attending on dissenting teachers, might seem like condemning them to perish by famine, lest they should use unwholesome food; and those who severely censure them, yet shew themselves indifferent about supplying the defect in question, will, naturally, and perhaps not

altogether unjustly, be regarded as more zealous against schism than against irreligion;—as careless whether their brethren be Christians, provided they be not sectaries.

We sometimes indeed hear it urged, in reply to this, that in some of the places respecting which the complaint is made, the churches are not filled; so that though they *would* be inadequate to the wants of the population, supposing all were well disposed to the establishment, there is even more than a sufficient supply for as many as choose to avail themselves of it; the rest being manifestly Dissenters, not from necessity, but from choice. But any man of judgment who considers the case attentively and candidly, will readily perceive how fallacious it would be to conclude, on such grounds, that the deficiency in question had originally no share in introducing or multiplying sectaries; or that the removal of it would have no tendency to diminish the number. When the ill-supplied spiritual wants of a large population afford an inviting opportunity, dissenting teachers

take occasion to establish themselves; and the fire which is thus kindled in the dry tree, may subsequently extend to the green: the sectaries come not to *supply* our deficiencies, but to *take advantage* of them;—not merely as occupiers of a waste spot, but as invaders, ambitious of conquest; though they first assail that part of the frontier which is undefended. It cannot be expected that, when once established, they will not labour strenuously, and often successfully, to increase their party, by drawing over churchmen to their side: and thus the waters which by being confined within too narrow a channel, have once begun to overflow, may in time form such a breach in its banks, as shall at length draw off the whole stream into a different course.

And no less fallacious would it be to conclude, that to make an adequate provision, such as we are speaking of, to meet the wants of our population, would have no tendency to recall into the fold those who have strayed: for not to mention that the fault, if it still remained, would then rest

entirely with them, the very circumstance of their perceiving that the members of the Church take an interest in their spiritual welfare,—display a zeal no less active than that of sectaries, and more free from any suspicion of impure motives,—and are forward to make pecuniary sacrifices in the cause of religion,—would at least excite their attention, and would be likely to awaken their respect and their gratitude,—to soften all unfriendly prejudices,—and thus to prepare their minds for the reception of the truth.

Can there be any one who will dare to say that they do not *deserve* such pains being taken for their conversion, because they were to blame in deserting the Church on insufficient grounds? And will he be content to be judged himself before God's tribunal, on the same principle, of receiving no more favour than he can in strict justice claim? In fact had the Apostles shewn no patient forbearance towards inattention or perversity, and refused to labour in the instruction of any except those who had made the most of all their advantages, and

had sought for truth with the utmost diligence and candour, it is to be feared that comparatively very few either of Jews or Gentiles would have been converted.

With respect to the persons of whom the duty in question is especially required, and the manner in which it should be performed, in each particular case, it would neither be possible, nor desirable, on the present occasion, to lay down rules: each man's conscience must decide as to the nature and extent of his own obligations; only let it be well considered in the first place whether there *is* not an obligation *somewhere*;—whether every costly work, which is not a work of necessity or of charity, is not a reproach to this nation, so long as the want I have been speaking of remains, in any one instance, unsupplied;—and whether we ought not therefore, somewhat to moderate our boasting and self-congratulation on account of what has been lately accomplished in this way; and to feel, as a body, more of sorrow and shame that so much should still remain to be done.

III. Lastly, our zeal must be free from

all personal bitterness, illiberal bigotry, and all those faults in short which have been formerly described as constituting and as promoting party-spirit. It is a difficult, but a most important duty, to steer the middle course between lukewarmness, and repulsive severity;—to oppose Dissenters *as such*, without being wanting in charity towards them as men, and as Christians;—to be steady in maintaining the sinfulness of schism, yet without censuring as unpardonable those who fall into it;—to "mark and avoid those who cause divi-"sions among us," yet without any narrow-minded and hostile aversion. But this difficulty, which is one of our appointed trials, must not be allowed to discourage us. He "who endured such contradiction of sinners "against himself," and laboured so zealously, yet so patiently, to convert men to the truth, may surely expect a similar union of charity with zeal from his followers. He who is deficient either in persevering activity in the cause of true Religion, or in discreet and conciliatory mildness, has not profited as he ought by the examples of our Lord and of his Apostles.

On the rules to be observed for thus conciliating those opposed to us, without compromising the truth, or appearing to countenance error, it is not necessary at present to enlarge; having treated fully in some former lectures of the cautions requisite, generally, in our treatment of those who differ from us; the application of which to the case of dissenters from our Church is sufficiently obvious.

I will conclude therefore by briefly mentioning one principle, which, though, in the present day, it would be admitted by almost every man when distinctly stated, is yet in practice perpetually overlooked; and from the neglect of which, men of opposite dispositions are led into opposite errors. The principle I mean is, that as Christ's "king-"dom is NOT OF THIS WORLD," legal coercion is an improper instrument for producing conformity to the Church, or assent to her doctrines. This, as a general maxim, scarcely any one would be disposed to deny: yet if it were practically kept in view, two contrary mistakes, which are very prevalent, would be avoided. On the one hand,

the legal toleration which our laws very wisely afford to Dissenters,—determining that no man shall be liable to punishment for his religious opinions, but shall be accountable for them only to his own conscience and to God,—seems to have led many to consider both Orthodoxy and Conformity as matters of no great consequence in a moral point of view: as if, because the question is, and ought to be, left to our individual discretion, we were not most awfully responsible for our use of that discretion. Now to conclude thus, of any doctrines, or of any nonconformity, that they are not sinful, because they ought not to be punishable by law, what is it but to imply that if they *were* sinful, they ought to be punishable by law? which is to allow, in other words, the propriety of employing coercion in religious matters; and thus to mistake the nature of Christ's kingdom.

On the other hand, the very same mistake leads men of contrary sentiments into an opposite error. Whoever, in his zeal for the Church, is disposed to treat Dissenters, either individually or collectively, with any

degree of harshness,—to seek to influence them by any secular motives, either of fear or of hope,—to appeal, in short, to their self-interest;—whoever grudges the toleration extended to them,—or endeavours to molest them in any way, and to abridge their civil rights, further than may be strictly requisite for self-preservation, on the ground of the erroneousness of the tenets maintained,—is, virtually, if not avowedly, drawing the conclusion, that heresy and schism ought to be checked by coercion, because they are in themselves sinful; which is precisely the converse of the mistaken inference above mentioned, that since they ought *not* to be so checked, they are not to be considered as sinful: and both these errors spring from the very same misapprehension concerning the respective provinces of legal and of religious restraint, and concerning the spiritual character of Christ's kingdom.

The legitimate modes of warfare by which we are to "contend for the faith," are those which have been alluded to in this discourse; *viz.* by an exemplary life,—by zeal tempered with discretion, in persuading, exhorting,

instructing,—and by manifesting a charitable, conciliatory, and, in short, truly Christian spirit. It is not enough however that we "walk in wisdom towards those that "are without" the pale of our Church, unless we are also most careful to preserve internal concord among ourselves. Nothing will more weaken our efforts in behalf of the Church against her opponents, than intestine divisions: which, besides that they draw off the attention of the members of any society from the common cause, will also dispose those most violent in party, to welcome the aid of foreign auxiliaries against a rival faction; while they furnish to the adversary a theme of triumphant reproach.

Discreet conduct therefore in what relates to parties within the Church being of such high importance, and that case differing in some remarkable circumstances from the foregoing, the subject will be reserved for a distinct consideration in the concluding lecture.

LECTURE VIII.

DIVISIONS WITHIN THE CHURCH.

1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?

THE Apostle's admonitions to the church of Corinth, both in this passage and in several others of the same Epistle, are of the highest importance to Christians of every age and country. But in order to appreciate them rightly, and apply them profitably to ourselves, we must keep in mind two circumstances which are very often, practically at least, overlooked: *viz.* first that the Apostle is not here accusing his converts of holding any *erroneous doctrines*, but of divisions, party-spirit and contentions: secondly, that he does not seem to be alluding to any open schism as having

taken place among them, but merely to intestine discord;—not, in short, to any separation *from* the Church, but to disunion *within* the Church.

These circumstances, I say, ought constantly to be remembered, in our application of St. Paul's precepts; not, of course, with any view of depreciating the importance of a right faith, and extenuating the evil of heresy; nor of implying that the sinfulness of schism is diminished by an avowed secession from the Church; but to guard against the mistake, (by no means unfrequent,) of too hastily setting our conscience at rest by the plea of being neither heretics nor dissenters. For it is not uncommon to hear men appeal to the soundness of their doctrine, and their strict conformity to the Church, when they would clear themselves from any imputation of being promoters of division; though perhaps there is, notwithstanding, so much of the spirit of party in their proceedings, that they are introducing, or preparing the way for, all that train of evils which have been formerly described. If, like the Corinthians,

who said, "I am of Paul, and I of Apol-
"los," they range themselves under distinct leaders, and distinct denominations, welcoming as brethren those who adopt a certain fixed phraseology, and regarding with bigoted aversion or jealousy, all others, they may, without forsaking either the Church or its doctrines, be guilty of fostering discord, and of manifesting that carnal spirit which St. Paul so strongly reprobates.

I have noticed in a former discourse the arguments by which the separation of Christians into parties is sometimes defended or excused; *viz.* that it is necessary for the friends of religious truth to combine, for the better promotion of their object; and that a party must be opposed by a party; lest those who are weaker, both in numbers and in cause, should prevail, by firm union and cooperation, against the insulated efforts of those who are on the right side. Now it is most important to remember, that the advantages proposed by such a combination are secured (as far as that is possible without more than coun-

terbalancing disadvantages,) by the union of those who hold the orthodox faith in the bond of such a society as our Church; and that consequently the above arguments will not justify (unless further reasons can be shewn for it) the subdivision of that Church into parties. I say, such a society as *our* Church; because there may be, and in fact in other countries there are[a], Churches, so constituted, that the most fundamental differences of doctrine may creep in, without occasioning any formal separation; so that those who are nominally members of the same Christian society, may in reality be as widely at variance on the most essential points of faith, as any, the most hostile, sects. Without articles of Religion,—without a creed, or an established liturgy,

[a] A striking instance of this may be found in the church of Geneva, which has lately been the scene of a contest among her members relating, as it should seem, to no less a question than the reception or rejection of the great doctrines of the atonement, justification by faith, &c. these having been, as it appeared, for a considerable period so completely lost sight of by the majority of her ministers, that the revival of them was made the subject of heavy complaint.

a Church may remain ONE indeed, as long as her members happen to coincide in their sentiments; but, as they must be expected, in course of time, to slide insensibly into a variety of different tenets, so, when this has taken place, their union becomes an empty name. But this is not the case with the Church of England. She furnishes a common authority, to which all her members may appeal: her Articles and Liturgy are barriers against the intrusion of any material error; it being next to impossible that those who honestly conform to both, should entertain any such fundamentally different notions as ought to preclude them from belonging to the same religious community, and holding together as becomes a Christian brotherhood. If indeed a mere assent and subscription to certain formularies were all that is required, a gradual departure from the spirit of these, if not from the letter, might often take place unobserved; but our Liturgy, which is in constant use, is so framed as to be a continual check upon the preacher,—a corrector of his errors, if he venture to teach any thing

inconsistent with it,—a reprover of his negligence, if he omit, or slightly pass over, any important doctrine,—a guide, to direct him to spiritual truth,—a pattern of zealous and earnest, yet sober-minded, and calm, and rational Christian exhortation; —in short, a standing monitor both to the minister and his congregation; which serves, according to the existing circumstances, either to prevent, or to detect and tacitly censure, or as far as possible to supply, any deficiencies in the preacher. If therefore the charge so often brought forward even by those who profess a complete approbation of the genuine doctrines of our Church, that the national Clergy do not preach the Gospel, be in any instance well founded, or if in any instance the doctrines of the Gospel are debased by the admixture of fanatical extravagancies,—in either case, the Minister, when he is reading the Liturgy, testifies with his own mouth against the errors of his own preaching; and thus the congregation are warned either to supply what is wanting, or to reject what is faulty, or to inquire respecting what is doubt-

ful; or, if the occasion call for it, to lay a complaint before the proper authorities.

As far as human means can be effectual, it seems scarcely possible that better provisions than these could be made against the suppression or perversion of Gospel truth; or at least against the necessity of having recourse, for the sake of opposing such evils, to the formation of subordinate associations, and party-distinctions within the Church. And when any such has arisen, there seems no sufficient reason for raising an opposite party to counteract the evil, while the Church itself thus furnishes a sufficient bond of union, and acknowledged common authority. The risk thus incurred (if it be not something more than a risk) of widening the breach,—of strengthening instead of weakening the party we oppose,—of plunging, in the heat of a contest, into the contrary extreme from theirs,—of diminishing Christian charity,—and of drawing off men's attention from the essentials of religion to controversial bickerings,—is not in this case counterbalanced by any adequate benefit.

Sometimes however we find it urged by men who profess to admit these principles, that they themselves seek not to form any separate party within the Church; nor pretend to more than to be genuine Churchmen; but that those whom they combine to oppose, are disguised sectaries, and covert heretics; outwardly professing indeed an attachment to the Church, but in reality holding sentiments hostile to the spirit of her doctrines and institutions. But it should be remembered, that, on the one hand, if any thing be taught or practised which can be proved contrary to the doctrine and discipline of the Church, this evil can be checked in a regular way, according to the constitution of that Church, without any need of forming a party for the purpose; and that on the other hand, if nothing of this kind can be proved, we are neither honouring nor serving the Church by combining against any such concealed hostility. We are not honouring her, because we are in fact implying that her Articles and Liturgy are so defective as to permit those who conform to them to be ne-

vertheless fundamentally erroneous: nor are we effectually serving her, because we are setting a dangerous example of presumption, which an opposite party may easily follow. *They* may as easily contend on *their* side, that, of all who profess conformity, they alone are the genuine Churchmen; and that *their* interpretation of the language of the Articles and Liturgy,—their judgment as to the true spirit of them,—are alone to be received as correct.

Some varieties of opinion, no doubt, exist, and must ever be expected to exist, among the members of our Church; nor would it be possible, were it desirable, that any religious community should be so constituted as completely to preclude all such differences. But our reformers seem to have designed to leave a certain latitude on points which they regarded as not of fundamental importance; and if we would approve ourselves genuine disciples of those illustrious men, we must not seek to narrow the basis on which they reared their noble edifice, nor to exclude any whom they intended to admit. As however there are

some differences which do not, so there are also others which do, imply the existence of principles adverse to the spirit of our Church; and the prevalence of these ought doubtless to be guarded against. For I would not be understood to contend that all varieties of doctrine are to be regarded with indifference, as long as those who maintain them profess their adherence to the Church; only let not these be made a plea for the formation of parties; which seldom fail to produce greater evils than those they propose to remedy. By reference then to the Articles, the Liturgy, and the Homilies, let each false doctrine or irregular practice be exposed and checked, as it arises; but let not those who appear sincerely desirous of adhering to the Church be either driven into dissent by being hastily charged with it, or formed into a party within the Church by being opposed in the spirit of party.

I. On the means of preventing or mitigating the spirit of party in the Church, it is not necessary here to enlarge; as the subject has been fully discussed in the pre-

ceding discourses; and as it is easy to apply the rules there laid down, to the case now before us. It will suffice therefore to touch briefly on a few of the cautions most important to be observed; and to offer some remarks as to their application in the present state of the Church.

1. Our first care should be, to avoid all extremes. Extremes in doctrine, extremes in practice, extremes even in manner, besides being in themselves faulty, have also a strong tendency not only to combine into a party those who approve of them, and who are of a disposition to go all lengths in that which suits their inclinations, but likewise (by a reaction which seldom fails to take place,) to encourage opposite extremes, and generate opposite parties. Excessive austerity, and excessive self-indulgence;—morality without faith, and faith without morality;—overscrupulous attachment to forms, and disorderly contempt of forms; these and many similar extremes both in preaching and practice, are always found mutually to promote each other, and to separate into hostile parties those who

fall into them [a]. So plain indeed are the lessons both of reason and of experience, on this point, that they would not perhaps be so often disregarded, were it not that (in some measure perhaps through the ambiguity of language) *moderation* is so frequently confounded with insincerity, indifference, or timidity; indiscretion and extravagance, —with decision of character, and an unhesitating, uncompromising, devoted zeal: and thus while the lukewarm and careless censure those who are zealous and energe-

[a] "Let no minister think it a proof of success or of "faithfulness to the Gospel, that he retains one class "of his congregation, and disgusts the other; but ra- "ther, if such should unhappily be the case, let him "examine his conduct with scrupulous anxiety, lest "some imprudence even in the declaration of the truth, "—some want of conciliation in the performance of "the commission entrusted to him, may have deprived "him of that blessed reflection and highest consolation, "*I take you to record this day, I am pure from the "blood of all men.* (Acts xx.)" *Sumner's Apostolical Preaching*, c. 3. I gladly take this opportunity of bearing testimony to the practical utility of this excellent treatise, as well as to the good sense and candour which it evinces; and of acknowledging my obligations to it for many of the principles laid down, and arguments adduced, in the course of these lectures.

tic, as prone to extremes, men of a more ardent temperament, on the other hand, are sometimes apt to accuse of lukewarmness, such as are perhaps no less active and earnest than themselves, but more careful to preserve in their sentiments and conduct the golden *Mean*. No one however need be at a loss how to regulate his behaviour on this point who has before him the example of St. Paul. *He* certainly cannot be suspected of being lukewarm,—of a want of hearty and thorough devotedness to his Master's cause,—or of not setting before his hearers "the whole counsel of God;" yet he neither so preached faith in the merits of Christ as to omit enforcing the necessity of personal holiness, nor so preached good works as to lead men to trust in them for salvation: he did not so teach the doctrines of assurance, and of spiritual influence, as not to exhort them to "work "out their own salvation with fear and "trembling;" nor did he so dwell on the importance of their own anxious exertions, as to keep out of sight the doctrine, that "it is God which worketh in us both to will

"and to do of his good pleasure;"—or to be backward in expressing his full confidence, that "He who had begun a good work "in them, would perform it until the day of "Christ:" in all points, in short, he is as striking an example of the discretion which steers a middle course between contrary excesses, as he is of sincere, and earnest, and uncompromising zeal.

The natural tendency of all men, when disgusted with the extravagances of one extreme, to rush into the opposite, is to be counteracted by constantly keeping in mind, that when any error or absurdity becomes prevalent, there is a very strong presumption at least that it must owe that prevalence, in part, to some admixture of truth and reason. And in fact the *more* unreasonable and extravagant any system may be, the stronger is the presumption that this absurdity must be blended with something just and rational which gives it currency. We must be careful therefore not to cast away the gold with the dross; but diligently to ascertain, and carefully to se-

parate and preserve, whatever is valuable in the mass.

2. And hence arises another rule, of very high importance, which is too frequently overlooked; that, instead of abstaining from all mention of such important doctrines as have been most perverted and abused,—or regarding them with suspicion, and touching but slightly upon them, as *dangerous* in their tendency, we should be, on that very account, the more diligent and constant in enforcing them. The great doctrines of justification by faith and of spiritual influence, afford a most remarkable instance to illustrate what has been said. How absurdly and how mischievously they have been perverted by enthusiasts, is but too well known; and it is to be feared that many, who are far from rejecting those doctrines, have yet been thus led to regard them as unsafe, and, in their teaching, to keep them very much in the back-ground. Whereas they ought for this very reason to teach them the more assiduously; not only because the neglect, is no less an evil than the abuse, of them, but because the very

best security against that abuse, is to preach the doctrines rationally, in their genuine and uncorrupted form [a]. Indeed the Champions of truth may derive from the Advocates of error many a useful lesson for counteracting the progress of that error, if they will but study to imitate whatever there is of good in the system of their opponents, while they avoid the evil.

3. To these cautions should be added, a disposition to make the most considerate and candid allowance for differences of taste and temper, such as were noticed in a former discourse; differences which, when good-sense and charity are not wanting, are rather an advantage than a detriment to the common cause; but which, in the absence

[a] In the vast savannahs of America, travellers are often, it is said, threatened with destruction from fires, which having been kindled by some accident, among the luxuriant but sun-scorched vegetation, spread, before the wind, with a rapidity which precludes all hope of escape by flight. Their only resource, when thus pursued by the conflagration, is, to kindle the grass *before* them, and thus leave the flame which follows them no fuel to sustain it. An analogous expedient to this may in many cases prove equally successful.

of these, are perhaps a more frequent occasion of mutual aversion and intestine discord, than even the most decided disagreement in matters of faith. If then we are sincerely desirous of preventing, as far as in us lies, these ill effects, it must be our study to restrain within due bounds our *own* peculiarities, rather than to criticize too strictly those of another; to judge favourably of those who differ from us in moral or intellectual character, where there is nothing sinful in such difference; and if *they* offend us by narrow-minded and uncharitable self-conceit, to be careful that we are not guilty of the same offence towards them.

4. Another branch of charity most essential for the preservation of unity and peace in the Church, is, to avoid as far as possible all imputation of bad motives. For "charity thinketh no evil;" *i. e.* puts the most favourable interpretation that the case will allow, on the conduct of another; and even where that conduct is faulty, is unwilling to attribute it to the worst intentions. The fact is, that since scarcely

any human action springs entirely from a single motive,—what is right, having usually some alloy of human infirmity, and what is wrong, not unfrequently, some mixture of good,—almost every one's conduct will admit of two interpretations. Many a man's activity, for instance, in matters connected with religion, may be attributed either to zeal for God's honour and service, or to a restless and busy disposition, and a love of display; and there may be truth in each supposition, though neither be the whole truth. Men's self-partiality generally leads them to give the more favourable explanation of their own motives; and an uncharitable temper too often tempts them to put the harsher construction on another's. Now if we not only charge with the worst intentions those whose conduct is in any respect censurable, but assign bad motives also (as may often be done with much plausibility) even to the best actions of those against whom we have a prejudice, we are evidently taking the most effectual means to promote mutual ill-will and division. If therefore it is our object

to prevent these evils, we must not only abstain from hastily forming any such harsh judgments, but even where we cannot but suspect corrupt motives, still, we should abstain as much as possible from openly imputing them; and thus exciting acrimonious feelings: especially when the conduct resulting from these motives, whatever they are, is, in itself, good: we should "rejoice that Christ is preached," even when we believe that He is "preached of "envy and strife." And even when this is not the case,—when any one's conduct is such as to call for censure,—still it is not only charitable, but also expedient, with a view to promote peace, that some credit should, if possible, be given for good intentions. It may be that he deserves this credit; but if not, still it is possible that he *will* deserve it;—that being thus mildly reminded of what his motives *ought* to be, he may be more profited by this gentle and oblique admonition, than by a severe rebuke.

5. Another point respecting which the most constant watchfulness is requisite, in

those who would maintain harmony and union among Christian brethren, is one which has been already mentioned in the former lectures; *viz.* the employment of such terms and phrases as have been made, or are likely to become, the badges of a party. The powerful influence of these, as it were, *technical* terms, in producing and keeping alive, and aggravating the spirit of party, has been already noticed; and the mischievous effects set forth, of adhering[a] to any such fixed modes of expression. But there is another caution belonging to this head which must not be omitted, as it is of no small importance, and is often neglected by those whose intentions are the most pure. There are many who systematically abstain altogether from the use of such terms as have been thus drawn into the service of a party, and made the Shibboleth by which the

[a] Mr. Foster, in his essay *on the aversion of men of taste to evangelical Religion*, has some excellent observations (Letters third and fourth) on the peculiarities of language adopted by divines; with a view to some other disadvantages attending it.

members of it are mutually recognised. Now such a procedure is not surely the most likely to break down party-distinctions; but tends rather to establish them the more firmly, by strictly confining the words and phrases in question to that use to which they have been thus appropriated. The most effectual method by which to defeat the object of one who should design to form or support a distinct party, is for those who do not belong to it, not only not to avoid, but even studiously to employ the characteristic language of that party; sometimes (if there be in it no intrinsic unfitness) in the *same* sense in which it is used by them; sometimes, and perhaps oftener, (if the general rules of language permit,) in a *different* sense; sometimes again, employing, in both cases, *other*, equivalent, terms also; studying to *vary* as much as possible (so that no impropriety nor ambiguity be admitted) the modes of expression adopted, for conveying the same sense. By this means, the use of the terms in question will speedily lose its peculiar force and significancy as indicative of a certain set of

opinions; and besides that we shall avoid those other ill consequences formerly mentioned[a], as resulting from such a restricted employment of a certain peculiar phraseology, its influence as the badge of a party will be destroyed.

6. The last caution I shall suggest for the prevention of party-spirit within the Church, and which is closely allied indeed to the foregoing, but which is too important not to be distinctly mentioned, is, to avoid as much as possible the *names* of parties: I mean, not merely that we should abstain from *assuming* any such distinctive appellations, but also that we should be very much on our guard against contributing to *bestow* them. However justly descriptive, and however unexceptionable in themselves, any such terms may be,—from whatever causes they may have arisen,—by whomsoever they may have been first applied, whether reproachfully or boastfully,—their tendency to form and to maintain parties, can hardly be disputed. It is better there-

[a] Lecture vi.

fore that the use of them should be as far as possible avoided. I say, as far as possible, because many of them have been so established by long usage, that it would often be difficult to abstain from them without much obscure circumlocution: but even in this case much good may be effected by a constant care to avoid introducing them *unnecessarily*. This plan, if steadily pursued, will have a tendency to bring many of them, gradually, at least into comparative disuse.

Of the terms in question some are *framed* expressly for the occasion; such as those which are derived from the names of founders or leaders of parties; as Calvinist, Arminian, Hutchinsonian: these would be, if the plan now suggested were adopted, employed as seldom as possible; and where circumstances will admit of it, discontinued altogether. Others again are words taken from common use, employed, as logicians speak, in the *second intention*, and *appropriated* as appellations of parties: these should be, in conformity with the above rule, employed very frequently, but in their

ordinary and *unappropriated* sense; with a view to do away the force of them as names of parties. For the oftener they occur, when not used in that restricted sense, the less fitted they will be to convey that sense. We should by no means therefore avoid the use of such terms as, "Serious," "Evangelical," "Religious," or, "Ortho-"dox;" but carefully abstain from using them to designate particular parties in the Church, or sets of opinions. And we should not only refrain from gathering round the standard of a party, like the Corinthians, who said, "I am of Paul, and "I, of Apollos," and refuse any distinctive appellation but that of "Christians of the "Church of England," but we should also be careful not to lend our aid, by *bestowing* any such appellations[a], to the combination

[a] However *reproachful* any appellation may be in its first origin, we must not conclude that, when established by use as the name of a party, it will not be voluntarily retained, and boastfully cherished, by those who are attached to that party. The name of "Quaker," for instance, which was originally applied in derision, is no longer regarded, by the members of that sect, as reproachful.

into a party of those whose opinions or practices we may think objectionable. And if ever an occasion occurs, (for occasions undoubtedly sometimes do occur,) which calls for a deviation from our general plan, and renders it expedient for the advocates of any right measure, or the opponents of any alarming abuse, to combine for the purpose of accomplishing their object, we should nevertheless not lose sight of that rule; but carefully avoid either assuming any distinctive appellation, or in any other way incurring the risk of giving unnecessary *permanence* to such a combination. We should on the contrary take especial care that it be dissolved as soon as the object proposed has been effected. For from the

On the other hand it should be remembered, that however honourable, and at the same time fairly applicable, in itself, any appellation may be,—however clearly it may describe the characteristics which *ought* to belong to every Christian, as, for instance "orthodox" or "evangelical,"—it cannot be innocently assumed as the badge of a party. Those of the Corinthians who said, "I am OF CHRIST," using this title *to distinguish them from other members of the same Church*, were no less censured than those who said, "I am of Paul, "or "I am "of Apollos."

operation of that principle of our nature which has been formerly described, and against which we should be ever on our guard, there is a strong tendency in parties to *perpetuate* themselves, when the circumstances which gave rise to them have ceased to exist, and when, consequently, they can no longer answer any good purpose, but may be productive of unqualified evil.

II. With respect to the parties actually existing in our Church, an attempt to characterize them distinctly, and to describe fully the respective faults which are most prevalent in each, would not only be invidious, and perhaps mischievous, but would in fact be in some degree foreign to the purpose of these lectures. It would be invidious, inasmuch as it might contribute to the too common mistake of unfairly classing among the members of a party those who are not devoted adherents of it; and attributing to them an entire adoption of sentiments with which they only partially coincide: and it might be productive of mischief, by combining more strongly those

who are thus classed together and distinctly recognised as a party. And as for the peculiar faults to which each class respectively are the most prone, these, how great and dangerous soever, do not so properly fall under our present consideration, as that one fault which is common to all, the Spirit of Party. A very brief mention therefore will suffice of some of the most prominent of two opposite classes of errors, (opposite, I mean, chiefly, as being the errors of *persons* who are opposed to each other) which in the present day call for especial caution in avoiding them.

1. On the one side then, we should be warned against, first, the fault of not only introducing religious conversation injudiciously, indiscriminately, and with something of irreverent familiarity, but also of employing in it constantly that fixed and uniform phraseology, which has been above spoken of; and regarding with suspicion, as irreligious, all who do not adopt the same set of expressions.

2. Another fault commonly to be met with in the same persons, is their permit-

ting a vicious party-spirit to swallow up that just and proper social-feeling,—that attachment to the Church, which they ought to cherish: so that while they regard with jealousy or aversion even the most sincerely pious members of that Church, who do not coincide in their peculiar views, they make light of the guilt of schism, and are forward to give the right hand of fellowship to dissenters from her communion, provided they will but adopt those peculiar views, and make common cause with their party.

3. An unreasonable and injudicious austerity of manners, and a disposition to confound together, things sinful in themselves, things merely inexpedient, or dangerous, and things indifferent, is another error which often accompanies the foregoing; and which is sometimes productive of very serious ill consequences, by producing feelings of disgust towards Religion itself, and by driving many (according to the principle above laid down) into the opposite extreme[a].

[a] See Sumner's Apostolical Preaching, c. 8.

4. There are also two faults in the preaching of some well-intentioned Ministers, which those most frequently fall into who are characterized by the peculiarities above mentioned. The one is the error which has been treated of in a former lecture[d], of attempting to *explain* too much,—of overlooking the boundaries of the human faculties;—and by presumptuously endeavouring fully to develop the most sublime and inscrutable mysteries of our Religion, affording matter of triumph to the infidel, and of perplexity to weak brethren.

5. The other fault is that of those who confine themselves too much to the inculcation of a few fundamental doctrines;—whose preaching is so exclusively *elementary*, that they scarcely proceed beyond the first rudiments of the Christian faith; and are perpetually occupied in laying the foundation, while they forget to rear the superstructure: so that sometimes a multitude of discourses from a preacher of this

[a] Lecture vi.

description will be found to be, in substance, but *one*; all being strictly confined to the same topics, and differing merely in the order of their recurrence. That this fault is less pernicious than the opposite one, of *omitting* the great fundamentals of Christianity, must be distinctly acknowledged; but it is no less certain that it *is* a fault; and how much such a practice is at variance with that of the Apostles, no one who carefully and candidly studies their writings, can doubt. In fact we may even lead our hearers into Antinomianism and the like pernicious errors, with which we are not at all affected ourselves, if we lay before them a partial and imperfect view of the doctrines of the Gospel. The preaching of the Truth will not produce its appropriate effects, unless we are careful to preach the *whole* Truth, as well as nothing but the Truth.

The faults to be guarded against on the opposite side, being of course, generally speaking, the contrary extremes to those just mentioned, it is not necessary to enter into any full description of them: such as, a disposition to dread, as savouring of Methodism,

any mention of religious subjects, except on the most solemn occasion, and in the most sacred places;—a leaning towards over-indulgence, and unsafe, if not sinful, compliance with the prevailing fashions of the world, from an excessive dread of the imputation of being "righteous overmuch," without sufficient care to keep on the safe side in doubtful matters;—and a tendency towards that erroneous attachment to the Church, which is ready to tolerate in those who are free from any taint of schism, and vehemently hostile to all sectaries, if not gross vice, at least the absence of sincere and vital Christianity; and to have but little fear either of lukewarmness or religious ignorance, in comparison of heterodoxy or dissent. It is to be observed however, that many who are by no means chargeable with any such laxity of sentiment as this, manifest nevertheless, on the same side, much of the same narrow-minded bigotry and party-spirit with those who fall into the above-mentioned excess. The most prominent fault in the preaching of the class of persons now under considera-

tion, is that which has been already adverted to; *viz.* that in their dread of enthusiastic and antinomian excesses, they are apt to keep in the back-ground the great fundamental doctrines of Christianity; and to dwell almost exclusively on such moral precepts, as might equally well have been delivered by a Pagan or a Jew; so that while those just mentioned lay a right foundation, without building upon it, these, on the contrary, are apt to build without a foundation. Nor are they justified in thinking it sufficient, if at the great festivals of our Church they direct the attention of their hearers to points of faith, in appropriate and distinctly doctrinal discourses. Even a more frequent statement, proof, and inculcation, of those points of faith, is far from being sufficient, if that faith be still kept *apart* from practice, as a *distinct* consideration; instead of being made, in the most conspicuous manner, the *groundwork* of it,—the motive from which it is to spring,—the tree of which it is the fruit. If we place before us, as a model, the writings of the Apostles, we shall plainly see that it is

not enough that the faith should be sound, and the conduct, right also, unless that conduct be made to arise *out of* that faith.

The faults however which have now been adverted to, as the most prevalent in the two opposite parties respectively, not only are less the appropriate subject of our present consideration, than the party-spirit which is common to both; but are so far of less practical importance, that they may be expected to diminish in proportion as that spirit itself is subdued, which contributes, above all other causes, to foster them. It should therefore be our first and most constant care, earnestly to protest against *this;* and to maintain a steady opposition to both parties, *as parties*; while we study, at the same time, to preserve the most friendly union possible with the members of both, considered *as individuals;* doing full justice to the merits of each, and carefully selecting and adopting whatever is right in their sentiments and practice. And if those who are disposed, either by their own temper, or from the result of their experience, to

reckon every one among the adherents of one party or another,—find themselves perplexed and at a loss in which class to place us [a], we may regard this circumstance with self-congratulation, as a presumption that we have been successful in steering a middle course between opposite extremes, in keeping ourselves untainted with the spirit of party, and in preserving unbroken, as far as possible, the bond of charity with all men.

III. That such a system of conduct however as I have been recommending will uniformly obtain full credit from all parties, and readily succeed in producing the general conciliation at which it aims, I am far from supposing. Indeed, it would be neither honest nor wise to deny, that the mid-

[a] It is observed by Aristotle, (Pol. b. 2.) that the constitution of Sparta had its elements so nicely blended, as to leave men in doubt to what class to refer it; some calling it a Royalty, some, an Oligarchy, others reckoning it Aristocratical, and others again as rather Democratical: a strong indication, as he observes, of its being so judiciously tempered, as to keep clear of the faults of each of the simple forms of government.

dle course, which you have been all along exhorted to follow, has its own peculiar disadvantages: nor can these Lectures perhaps be more suitably closed, than by a distinct statement of these disadvantages, together with the counterbalancing benefits; not only that the suggestions which have been offered may not be thought the result of over-sanguine views and miscalculation of difficulties, and may be allowed to be at least sober and deliberate; but also that any one who is disposed to approve them, may be duly prepared for the obstacles he will have to encounter, if he practically adopts the principles I have been inculcating.

1. Let him be warned then, that he must expect to incur, if not hostility, at least unfriendly suspicion, from the violent, the narrow-minded, and the uncharitable, of all parties; who are frequently the larger, and almost always the more forward and active, portion of each. For a time at least, he will find that every word and action will be scrutinized with uncandid jealousy, and not seldom misrepresented: by many of each party he will be considered as a dis-

guised adversary, the more to be dreaded and disliked for not professing open hostility: while others regard him with contempt, as a weak, a lukewarm, or a timorous character, meanly seeking to retain the favour of both parties, by a partial sacrifice of the truth: while some again who are not disposed to judge so harshly, or so contemptuously, will yet doubt whether it be safe to afford him their hearty co-operation.

2. In addition to this disadvantage he must expect also, even when he has surmounted unfriendly opposition, to forfeit, for the present at least, much of the celebrity which he might otherwise have attained, and the desire of which is so natural to man. For unquestionably equal talents will obtain very unequal shares of applause, in the Advocate of a party, and in the Peace-maker. The former, besides that he is heard with partiality, and eagerly praised, by those whose cause he defends, has also the advantage, that there is in the very tone of controversy itself, something spirited and energetic, which attracts attention, and excites a general interest; and likewise that if by his exertions a party is formed, or re-

vived, or raised into celebrity, he will not fail to partake of that celebrity; and perhaps will have his name transmitted to posterity among the distinguished champions of the cause; while he, on the contrary, who is labouring to extinguish controversies, and to suppress parties, must expect, and even hope, that if his efforts are successful, both their name and his own will be buried in peaceful oblivion [a].

Let him hope however that by patient zeal, he may in time wear out both Obloquy and Suspicion;—that by unconquerable gentleness, he will at length disarm hostility;—that by his firmness and activity, he will gradually do away the imputation of weakness and insincerity;—and that whenever the storm of angry passion shall subside, the steady though quiet current of sound reason will prevail. He may trust at least, that if he incur the censure of the intemperate and bigoted on both sides, the candid and ju-

[a] He must be ready to exclaim with the disinterested hero of classic fiction,

Hæc dira, meo dum vulnere, pestis
Pulsa cadat, patriam remeabo inglorius urbem.
Virg. Æn. b. 11.

dicious on both sides will support him by their approbation. And let him remember, that in proportion as he is advancing in the good opinion of the members of opposed parties, he is also promoting their benefit: in proportion as they become reconciled to *him*, they will also approach towards a reconciliation with each other.

And finally, let those who are disposed to regret that injustice is done to their abilities, or to their intentions,—to grieve at meeting with calumny, or with unmerited neglect,—remember, that "there is nothing covered "that shall not be revealed, and hid, that "shall not be known:"—that He in whose service they are engaged,—who has blessed the Peace-makers as His own children,—and "to whom all hearts are open,"—shall one day, by the brightness of His presence, clear away all obscurity, and dispel all falsehood and delusion; and that on *that* day "their Father which seeth in secret, "Himself, shall reward them openly."

THE END.

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